

[Continued from page 49.]

Uncle Godfrey was not softened even by dinner.

"Jane," said he, "never have soup until you have a cook that understands it. This is paste, not soup. You girl, keep the door shut—the draft comes to my back; and keep the fire up; it is all in one corner. I don't like stale bread. Haven't you got some new, and no crust? Can't you see I've got false teeth?"

"Jane," said he, a little later, "the nut-ton hasn't hung long enough. I suppose you play on the piano, and let the cook do as she likes. Take my advice, discharge that woman; the potatoes are as hard as bullets."

Over his wine, Mr. Latimer—his wife being gone with the children—ventured to lament the ascetic loneliness of Uncle Godfrey's life, and to wish he lived nearer to them.

"I like it," said the amiable anchorite of the Adelphi. "Every one to his taste. Some people like fidgety children that break and spoil everything, and some don't. Ugh! Latimer, when I was young, I had a disappointment that in one day turned my heart into a jar of vinegar; my blood since that is cold and sour. I have my own fancies and I follow them. I'd rather die in a ditch than be surrounded by legacy hunters—counting the sand in my hour glass as it ran out, pampering me, and encouraging my follies, agreeing with me, and all the time longing to see the hearse come and fetch me to the netly, damp corner of some respectable cemetery. Ugh! I know them, I know them; they shall wait a bit—they shall wait a bit.—Pass the bottle. Why don't that slut bring the coffee?"

That night, Mr. and Mrs. Latimer, when their pleasant guest had retired to bed, and all the house was quiet, discussed Uncle Godfrey.

Mr. Latimer with all his amiability, was much irritated at the rudeness of the rich, suspicious old boarder.

"But, my dear Fred," said Mrs. Latimer "remember the children, and bear with uncle. Remember we have expectations; and do think of those dreadful bills, and how little we have to meet them."

"My dear Jane," said her husband, "I could do anything for your sake, and the children's; but I cannot bear this man's insolence. Every kind word he attributes to our hopes of his money—both his money!"

"Fred!" "I tell you, Jane, I cannot and will not bear this mean suspicion. My ideal may be blunted by poverty, but still I am not all earth yet, and bear it I will not. If I am civil to him, remember, Jane, it is because he is your relation."

The next day was Christmas day, and Uncle Godfrey was led to church triumphantly by Mrs. Latimer and the children ensconced in a bower of holly, and under an emblazoned rural monument to the memory of General Ruragates, a hero of the old American war.

At dinner, that day, Uncle Godfrey was severe on country churches.

"Too much coughing," he said, "Ugh! Why do you allow that chorus of coughing old women in the aisle? They are all deaf, they only come to advertise themselves as wanting new shoes and cloaks. Ugh! I know them. How the ducks quacked, when you were reading; how that donkey brayed when you read those banes, as if rejoicing at another fool's marriage. Latimer you shoot over the peoples' heads. What on earth do your chawbacous care about the Antoninian sect, and the errors of the Welsh Pelagius. Bah! Follow them into their daily life; they don't know how to live on earth yet; make them fit for that, before you go further.—You, girl, don't grin there, but give me some beer—Jane, do you teach Dora to eat with her knife, and George to throw bread crumbs at Willy? Thank heaven I'm a bachelor."

At whist, his favorite game, Uncle Godfrey was still more terrible. He always refused to take dummy. He stumped with his wooden leg, if his partner forgot his thirteenth card, or lost a trick by any momentary absence of mind. If the game went well, and there was any long se-

quence of success, he grew malicious, and openly hinted that his opponent was losing on purpose to please him—an insult to his play; and Mr. Latimer resented the accusation.

"They always do it at the Fitzsimmonses," replied Uncle Godfrey. I never loss there. They let me win shillings, in hope, some day, they'll turn to guineas; but I'll outlive them yet. That Fitzsimmons is weak in his chest. By the way, how's your chest Latimer? I thought your voice weaker than it used to be.—George, don't make that noise with the humming top—Jane, do you ever flog that boy?"

"Uncle," said Mrs. Latimer at breakfast on the seventh day of the visit, "I have arranged with Mrs. Benson to go tomorrow to see Melcombe—it is one of our show places—you must not return without seeing that."

"Hate show-places; cold damp rooms, fussy, pompous housekeepers; too proud to tell you anything; willing enough to take large fees; hurried and see nothing. No, go back to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" cried Mr. and Mrs. Latimer in a breath for they had grown accustomed to the old bachelor's brusquerie, and began to be amused with his shrewd honesty and caustic frankness.

"To-morrow—said to-morrow when I came—and meant what I said. Sponge on you no longer; poor people. Besides, all my port's gone—can't drink catsup and logwood. I and my wooden leg go to-morrow. Glad of it, ain't you Dora? George, come here and polish my wooden leg. Willy, give uncle a kiss, and go to bed; it is getting late. You'll be a happy family to-morrow, old Uncle Godfrey back in his den."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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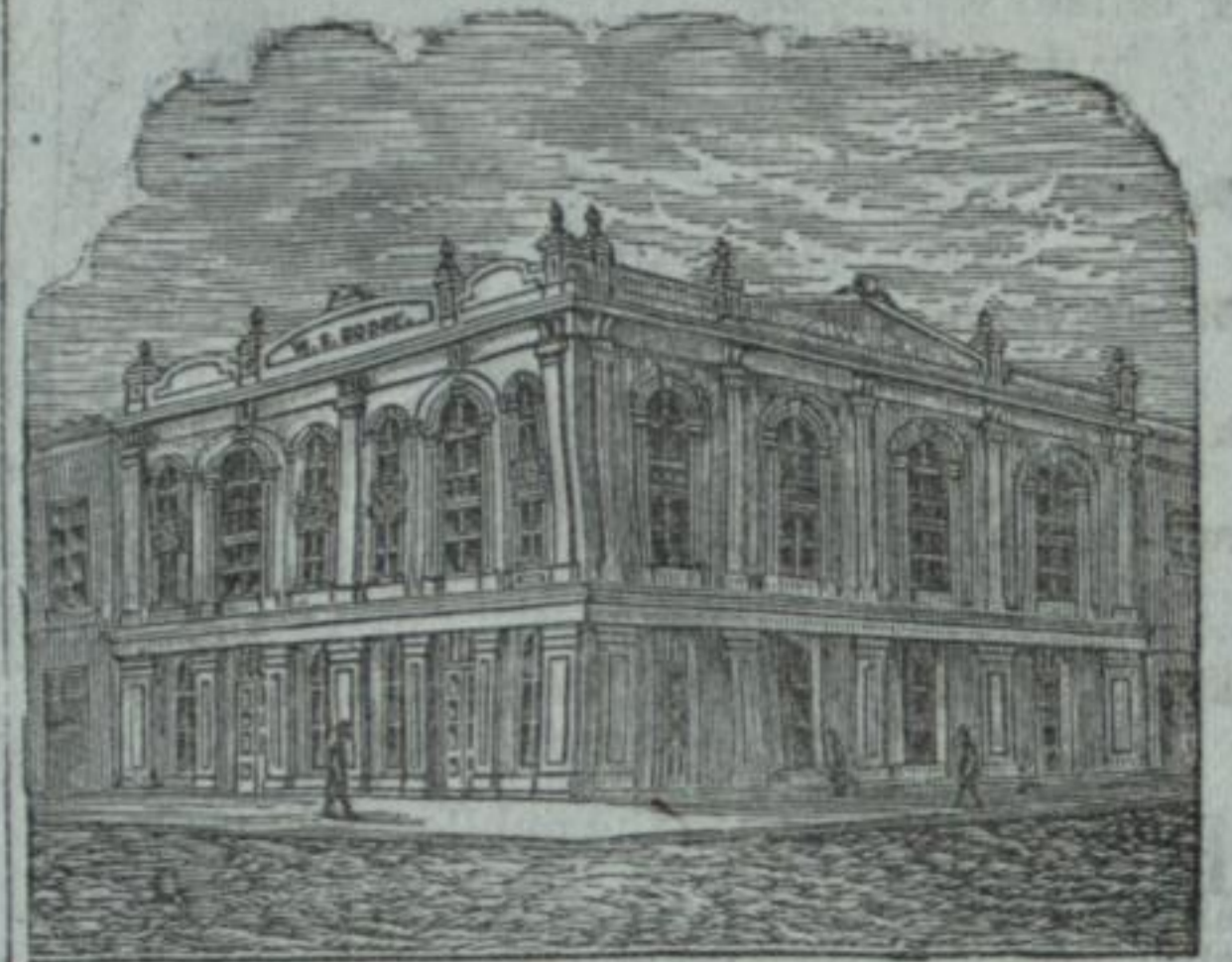
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