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teel poverty, which they exchange very naturally for the perfumes of the gilded drawing-room. It is not the plots that are noteworthy, but the animated and fascinating style in which these threadbare incidents are recounted. Where so many novel-writers are pompous or affected, Mrs. Burnett is as simple, as natural, and as amusing as any one could wish. For myself I find her high spirits and her pathos much better reading than the cold discussion of a "problem" in *That Lass o' Lowrie's*, and the willful accumulation of distressing incidents in *Surly Tim and Other Stories*. This last book is a record of various forms of mental and physical suffering that enrage while they depress the reader. One man has hot words with his wife, and then goes out on the beach to help launch a boat; something gives way; the boat falls on him, not comfortably killing him, but leaving him pinned down to watch the futile efforts of his friends to lift the boat up, and to make impressive farewell speeches while the tide slowly crawls up and drowns him. Why the hardy fishermen and children of the sea did not think of digging the sand away from beneath him, and so freeing him, is not made clear, but they did not; and what with the man's dying and the way of his dying the sympathetic reader gets a choking feeling in his throat, as if he had held his head under water a few seconds longer than was pleasant; which, however, is no more pathos than reading the morning paper is devoting one's life to study. So in the other tales there is a tendency to wring the heart of the reader, which is not counterbalanced by equally marked literary merit. In a word, Mrs. Burnett seems to have learned to think ill of the much-trodden path she first followed, and under this feeling to have tried to strike out for herself where her rivals were fewer. Dickens is one whose influence may be seen in one or two of the short sketches in this volume. But the more serious attempts to be impressive at all hazards seem to me to tempt this writer beyond her depth; for the heaping up of casualties is not tragedy, and the problem she

took up in *That Lass o' Lowrie's*, how to marry a pauper and quickly civilize her, leads her aside from work in which she has done well, in describing the hopes and fears of conventional life.

—It strikes me that nothing is more bewildering than the totally different impressions the same words often make upon different minds; an unprejudiced person, with a turn for analysis, must sometimes stop and ask himself, seriously, whether he is mad, or his neighbor. The other day, in a mixed company, the subject of following the hounds came up, in connection with the new Queen's County hunt, on Long Island. Some one remarked that English ladies no longer took part in such sports, as formerly. "But," I said, "in the latest English stories they do. Take *Daniel Deronda*: Gwendolen followed the hounds." "Yes; but Gwendolen was fast," was the answer. "Fast!" I exclaimed. "Is it possible that Gwendolen Harleth impressed any of you as fast?" "Decidedly so," they said. "But," I protested, "I do not think George Eliot meant to portray a fast girl, at all." They did not know what she meant, of course; one thing was certain, however, her Gwendolen to them *was* fast. I looked around their unmoved circle. There was no appeal. They were ten against me. So, then, the proud, refined, dainty Gwendolen, with her intense fastidiousness and repugnances, was labeled "fast;" the very last word I should have dreamed of applying to her.

More recently, in speaking to a friend of some paragraphs on *That Lass o' Lowrie's*, which appeared in the Contributors' Club, I said, "they struck you as favorable, of course?" "Why, no," she answered; "they did not strike me so, especially." "What can you mean!" I exclaimed. "I intended a high degree of praise, for I liked the book. Did I not say that the Lass had gained for herself a place in my memory as a distinct character, next to that occupied by Grandcourt, thereby placing Mrs. Burnett's work, in this instance, next to that of George Eliot herself? What

more could be said?" "Oh, I don't know," replied my friend; "still, it certainly did not strike me as a favorable criticism." Now, what is one to do?

All this comes to my mind as I write the name Farjeon. He is in this country now, and attention is freshly directed towards his stories. Discussion, even acrid discussion, means strength, I think. The continued arguing of the Contributors' Club over Tourguéneff and Henry James proves that they have strength of some kind, does it not? Just as the fact that there are many opinions about a man proves that at least the man is not a nonentity. Solomon Isaacs, at this writing Farjeon's latest story, shows his good and bad points together. It is not so good as *Blade-o'-Grass*; it does not approach *At the Sign of the Silver Flagon*; but neither is it so bad as *Love's Victory*, nor so wildly improbable and dislocated as *Bread-and-Cheese* and *Kisses*, or *The Duchess of Rosemary Lane*. The old-clothes man, *Moses Levy*, is well drawn; we feel an affection for him, and are glad when on Saturday morning he has for his breakfast, in addition to bread and coffee, a "bit of fish stewed in brown gravy," with onions "made tasty with lemon." We picture him coming home at night, with a pyramid of acquired hats on his head and a well-filled bag over his shoulder, happy in the thought of a good bargain and the hot supper his pretty daughter Rachel has ready for him in their little second-story room. The other old-clothes man, Solomon Isaacs, is not so well drawn; nor do we feel much interest, either, in his son Leon, that talkative, successful young Hebrew. In spite of all we can do, the way in which he discourses upon "frying" and "a raisin stew," combined with the particular statement that he has "wide nostrils" and a "large mouth," brings up an image with which we are all familiar, — the smartly-dressed young Israelite on railroad cars and at railroad eating-houses, buoyantly fulfilling his mission as a commercial traveler. There are some very good bits of description in the book, such as the ceremony called "sitting for

joy;" the arrival of old Moshé from Jerusalem, with his ninety years, his smiling, uncomprehending nose, his long beard, and his Hebrew benedictions; fat Milly Isaacs running "to give Mr. Levy a 'ug;" and, best of all, the cribbage played by the two old men, and Solomon Isaacs' final triumph with his battered half-penny. One does not exactly see what the Introduction and the last four pages have to do with the tale; it looks as though they were fastened in to make it a Christmas story by force, and account for the opening illustration.

To go back over the list of Farjeon's books. *Blade-o'-Grass* and its sequel, *Golden Grain*, seem to me the best of the London stories. The picture of the poor little girl, with the tiger "in her inside," crawling to the lamp-post for its friendly light, stealing meat from the cat's-meat man, telling lies deftly, and sleeping in gate-ways is pathetic; the story of the same child grown to womanhood, loving a thief devotedly and passionately, and happy with him in her miserable home, is powerfully touching. The end of the poor, mournful little baby, who died silently in the darkness, all alone, while the wretched girl-mother scoured the streets in search of food, is something one cannot forget.

It is a pity that this undoubtedly strong writer cannot prune his branches a little. Did any one ever behold such a collection of plots! Most of the stories are short, but so crowded with characters and incidents that there is time only for a statistical mention of them; like the catalogue of a picture exhibition. Take *The Duchess of Rosemary Lane*: how well it opens! — the beautiful child living in the cellar, with her faithful Sally and the reasoning cobbler. We are interested at once, and expect a romance in which poor thin Sally can play a part also, as the gypsy distinctly predicts. But nothing of the kind happens; after childhood nobody does or is anything that you expect, and Sally has no chance at all. The duchess herself turns out a soulless young creature, without force enough to be anything clearly, either good or bad; and she is

enveloped in a whirl of mixed-up people, among whom the "lovely lad," playing on a tin whistle and cherishing a sentimental affection for a baby throughout long years of vagabond life, and Arthur Temple, who, on the last page, passes his arm around Mrs. Lenoir, turns his back upon his father (his mother, too? one wonders), and takes "the road which justice points out," whatever that may be, are the most fantastic. Bread-and-Cheese and Kisses is a kaleidoscope picture of people and places, in which Totty's fig grandfather with cinnamon legs, and death in thousands of tons of snow, are thrown together, but with about as much connection as the phantasmagoria of a dream.

There is a good deal of Australia in Farjeon's stories, some strong pleas for the wretched London poor, some life pictures of that brutal English crime of wife-beating, — comparatively unknown among us, thank Heaven! — and a curious insistence upon the terms "lady" and "gentleman." He will have it that his heroines are distinctly ladies, although they may be waistcoat-makers, singing chambermaids in a poor traveling dramatic company, or girls brought up in a cellar, who have never been to school a day in their lives. This is a flaw, and resembles one of our worst local Americanisms. Farjeon has been compared with Dickens; but Dickens never proclaimed that Dot in *The Cricket on the Hearth*, Little Dorrit, and Emily in *David Copperfield* were ladies. He cared nothing at all for the title, but showed us the women as they were, and taught us to love them.

It does not seem to me that Farjeon is in the least like Dickens. He writes Christmas stories, and he describes the homes of the poor; but that is all. Where is the unflinching humor which shines on almost every one of Dickens's pages? Where are Dick Swiveller, Mr. Guppy, Chadband, Mrs. Todgers, and a hundred others? No; Farjeon is serious, and in earnest. If he must be likened to somebody, I should liken him to Charles Reade; he belongs to that school. Take what is, in my opinion,

his best story. At the Sign of the Silver Flagon; how it recalls the quick, vivid work of Reade! It is a brilliant, exciting, splendid tale, which is fairly hot in the telling, so that you breathe quickly as you read (that is, as far as the death of Philip and the end of part first. After that, Farjeon's evil genius in the shape of Plot appears, and spoils all the rest). I have never seen anywhere a more striking picture of Australian gold-fields, and of life there. The love of Philip for the "singing chambermaid," his gallop after the flowers, the "pray for rain, darling," the chattering of the stamping-machine and the midnight ride of the two partners from the ball to the Reef to see the sparks flying and hear the iron feet at work; the terrible, tragic end of poor burned Philip, lying there motionless, trying to whisper "Margaret," are told with wonderful force, which is all the stronger for being so simple. If the story ended with part first, I should put it up on a line with *Christie Johnstone*; it has the same vivid narration of deeds and words, — a positive story, a story of action, and not the explanation of motives and thoughts, the psychological analysis, and slow movement of the style so much in vogue to-day. "Do?" said an old woman, laying down her spectacles the other day, when asked about the characters in a late novel she was reading, "do? They don't *do* anything, that I can make out; but they *think* a deal!"

Analysis is interesting; but are we not in some danger of going too far in that direction, and becoming one-sided? Let us pardon some of Farjeon's faults, therefore, for the sake of his positiveness and this *Silver Flagon*; the story can go into the other side of the balance, and restore our equilibrium.

— I wish to confide to the Club a paradox in the philosophy of Household Art which has troubled me a good deal. I have got so far as to know that I ought to be "sincere;" but I also hear the virtue of economy extolled as sincere, and there are various points in which economy and Decorative Art are not reconcil-