

Suddenly Nellie, asking me to excuse her for a moment, left the parlor. Out of the darkness I conjured up dreadful visions of Mrs. Mayton in every pose and feature of disdain, and, aside from any other cause, I was thankful when the gentle step and rustling dress of my darling announced her return.

As she sat down on the sofa I stole my arm about her waist, and exclaimed :

"Nellie, I am not a coward, but how can I ever ask your mother's consent?"

She trembled for an instant as she felt the pressure of my arm, but she made no reply.

"She is so terribly sarcastic—so cutting, when she wishes to be," I continued.

"She certainly is," said Nellie, in a very serious tone.

"So merciless—so pitiless, in fact," said I.

"Very true," replied Nellie, with considerable emphasis.

"So you—do you know what she thinks of me?" I asked.

"Well," drawled Nellie, rather reluctantly, "the truth is, she thinks you're a goose—she said so this very day."

"Perhaps she will pity me a little when she knows how I love you," said I.

"I don't know," said Nellie, dubiously. "She says she don't believe you'll ever amount to anything, and she's sorry for the poor girl who is taken in by you."

Cold drops of perspiration stood on my brow. In one terrible moment I repented of having told Nellie of my love, but the taunting she had repeated so insulted my pride that I cried :

"You *shall* be my wife, despite anything she may think or say!"

"Sh-h-h!" whispered Nellie, as we heard footsteps near us, "perhaps that is mother, now."

As the unknown touched the chandelier, I attempted to remove my arm from its resting-place, but my darling, apparently determined to force an issue at once, and to uphold me in my critical moment, caught my wrist tightly with ten soft but very strong little fingers. There was a hiss of gas, and then a bright flash, and as, with a desperate attempt at calmness, I raised my head to meet my doom, I saw under the chandelier, with a wonder-struck countenance, Nellie Mayton herself, while a loud peal of laughter escaped from her mother, who was tightly locked in my arms!

"What are you two people doing?" said Nellie, slowly recovering her senses.

"Why," said Mrs. Mayton, with an air of self-forgetful resignation, "I came into the parlor a moment ago, and took a seat on the sofa, in the dark, and this impudent fellow—I'm old enough to be his mother—put his arm around me, and wondered how he could ever ask my mother's consent. When your father proposed, he was thoughtful enough to ask *my* consent first, but I suppose the fashion of courtship has changed since then. It made my blood boil to hear your saintly grandma called merciless, and sarcastic, and cutting, and all sorts of dreadful things; but I've borne it meekly for your sake, Nellie, that you might have a step-father young and silly enough to sympathize with you, and—"

"He's my own lover," said Nellie, with a laugh and a blush, as she boxed her mother's ears, and hid herself in my arms.

Mrs. Mayton gave us a look of mock indignation, but only for a moment, for two motherly tears entirely hid the sharpness of her eyes; then the lips I had dreaded so much gave each of us a kiss which was likewise a blessing.

HUNTING THE RHINOCEROS.

NOTHING is, perhaps, more striking at the present day than the roaming of French, and especially English hunters and sportsmen. The days of Nimrod have come again, and it is probably from this Nimrodic tendency that a recent English writer has issued a volume to show that the Catholic Church is only the worship of Nimrod and his mother. That the English worship Nimrod is evident, whether Dr. Pusey had anything to do with it or not.

Quæ regio in terris nostris non plera labores, may well be the cry of the animal kingdom. No part of earth is free from the English hunter. We wondered, a few years since, to see some sprigs of the insular aristocracy coming across the Atlantic to get a chance shot at a bison on the Western prairies; but what is that to plunging into the interior of Africa, not to increase our store of knowledge, but merely to have the boast of having killed lions, giraffes, rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses?

The hunting is always attended with danger, and is in some respects an excellent school. The rhinoceros, proof on almost all points against spear or ball, with his immense power, makes the hunt a most exciting one, mild as the animal is when undisturbed. Owing, indeed, to this, it retires from parts frequented by men to the dense and secluded portions yet left comparatively unvisited by those who wield the deadly rifle. The hunter has accordingly to secure the aid of a party of natives, and seek it in its chosen haunts, often in deeply excavated passages along the declivities of hills and mountains. Roused from these, and infuriated by clamor, it rushes on; the hunter, often at great peril, taking the shot he has so labored to get the opportunity of firing.

The rhinoceros is probably the leviathan of Job. In modern times, the first specimen seen in Europe was one sent from India to the King of Portugal, in 1573, and by him presented to the Pope; although his Holiness did not enjoy the pleasure of seeing it, the beast having, in a paroxysm of fury, stove in the side of the frail vessel that was bearing it over the Mediterranean, and gone to the bottom. In 1685, a live one reached England, of the one-horned kind, and many followed; but no specimen of the two-horned rhinoceros, Keitloa, has ever been seen there.

THE WIDOW AND HER TWO DAUGHTERS.

ONCE upon a time there was a widow, a very worthy woman, who had two daughters, both of whom were very amiable; the eldest was named Blanche, the second Vermeille. They had been given these names because the first had the fairest complexion in the world; and the second, cheeks and lips as red as vermilion or the finest coral. One day the good widow, sitting at her door spinning, saw a poor old woman, who could with difficulty walk, even with the aid of a stick.

"You seem very tired," said the good widow to the old creature: "sit down a moment and rest," and immediately desired her daughters to place a chair for her. They both rose directly, but Vermeille ran quicker than her sister and brought the chair. "Will you take something to drink?" said the good woman to the old one.

"With all my heart," replied she; "I could even eat something, if you could give me a morsel to refresh me."

"I will give you all in my power," said the good widow; "but I am poor, and it will not be much."

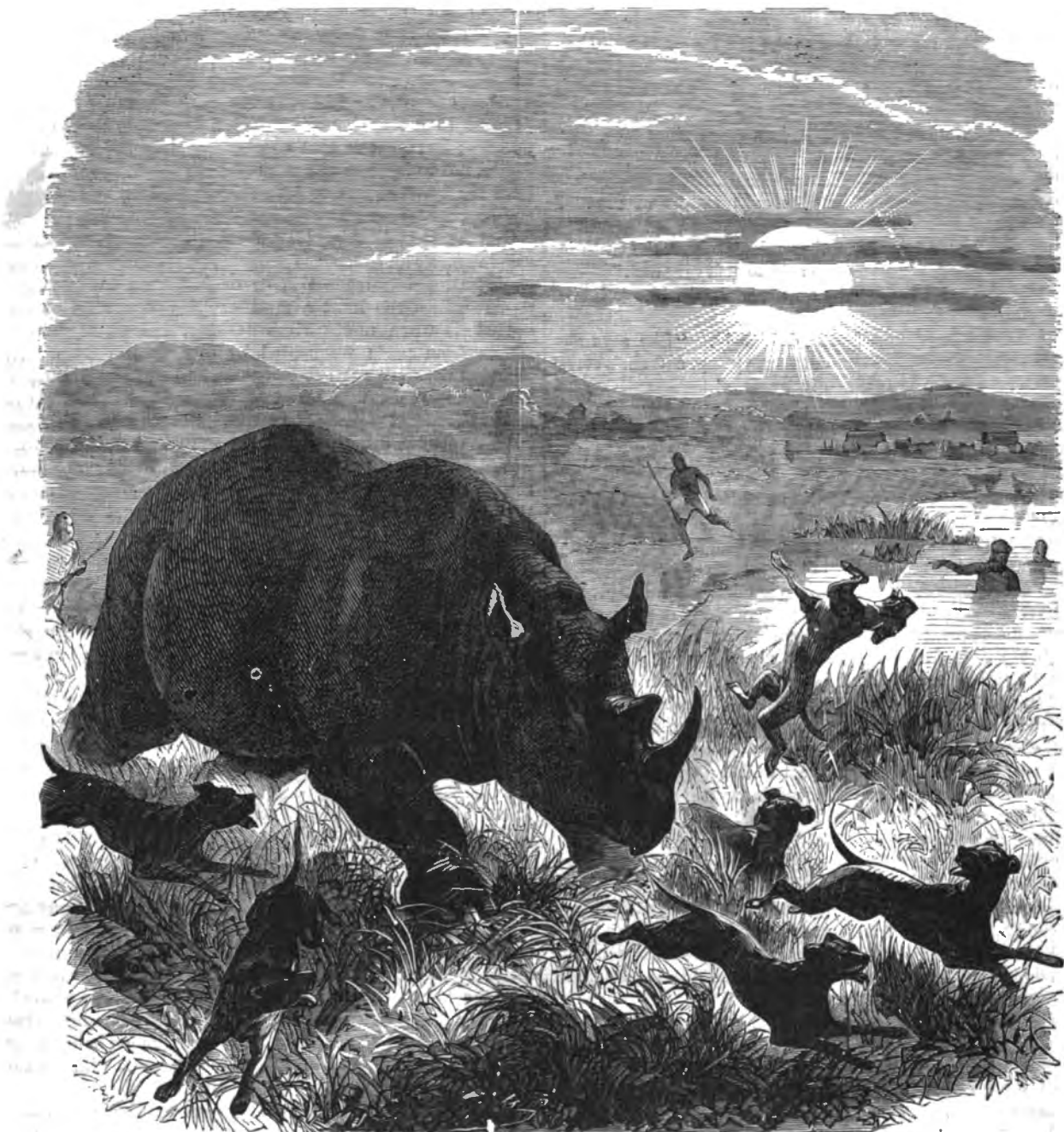
At the same time she told her daughters to attend on the old woman, who placed herself at the table; and the good

widow told her eldest daughter to go and gather some plums from a tree which the young girl had planted herself, and of which she was very fond.

Blanche, instead of obeying her mother cheerfully, murmured against this order, and said to herself, "It was not for this old, greedy creature that I have taken so much care of my plum-tree." She dared not refuse, however, to gather some of the plums; but she did so with an ill grace.

that she presented it to the stranger she disappeared, and they saw in her place a beautiful lady, who said to the mother:

"I am about to reward your two daughters according to their deserts. The eldest shall become a great queen, the second a farmer's wife." At the same time, striking the cottage with her stick, it disappeared, and they saw in its place a pretty farm. "There is your lot," she said to Vermeille.



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"And you, Vermeille," said the good woman to her second daughter, "you have no fruit to give this good lady, for your grapes are not yet ripe."

"True," said Vermeille; "but I hear my hen cluck; she has just laid an egg, and if madame will like to eat it warm, I will give it to her with all my heart."

At the same time, without awaiting the reply of the old woman, she ran to fetch the egg; but at the same moment

"I know that I have given to each that which she will like best."

The fairy departed as she uttered these words, and the mother, as well as her two daughters, remained struck with astonishment. They entered the farmhouse, and were charmed with the style of the furniture. The chairs were only of wood, but they were so polished that they could see themselves reflected in them as in a mirror. The bed-linen