

**T LEAVES: BEING A  
COLLECTION OF  
PIECES WRITTEN  
FOR PUBLIC READING**

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T leaves: being a collection of pieces written for public reading by Edward F. Turner

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**EDWARD F. TURNER**

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LEAVES:

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FOR PUBLIC READING.*

BY

EDWARD F. TURNER,  
AUTHOR OF "VAN ELEN'S SISTER" AND "MORE T LEAVES."

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### MR. PIPER'S MITTENS.

It *was* cold that New Year's Day. The people in the streets looked as they only can look when Jack Frost, Esq., is at work. All the noses which were not red were blue, saving a select few (mostly Romans and Grecians), which were purple. Teeth held long conversations without any sort of reference to the wishes of their owners. Fingers and toes were either aching acutely, or else indulging in all known varieties of pins and needles, or else perfectly devoid of any feeling whatever. Breath issued out of mouths in clouds of steam until one might have fancied that all the boilers and steam-engines in London had assumed a human shape and gone out for a holiday.

Marvellous garments and head-coverings were brought into requisition; astounding fur caps—stupendous coats—gloves that nobody could possibly have shaken hands in—comforters that appeared to wind round and round and round, and to have no perceptible beginning or end. The thermometer was falling fast, and so were the foot-passengers, for the pavement was covered with a coagulated mixture of frozen mud and snow as hard as iron and slippery as glass.

Verily it *was* cold, and no one was more thoroughly persuaded of the fact than was Mr. Piper as he walked and ran, and slipped and stumbled along on his way to the City

as best he might. There was no appearance of poverty about Mr. Piper, but his throat was fully exposed to the biting wind, and his hands were innocent of all covering except a pair of thin kid gloves, through divers rents in which his half-frozen fingers protruded visibly and most unwillingly. And there was generally about him an indescribable air of neglect, a want of being, as it were, finished off, which would have caused any person of discernment to say in a moment, "That man has no one to look after him at home."

Nor had he; for he was a widower, and his only child, a daughter, was for all practical purposes dead to him. She had married secretly, and very imprudently, a young gentleman with light-blue eyes and little fluffy whiskers, and whose means were even smaller than his whiskers. Mr. Piper had all along set his face against the match, and when one evening after he had got home the young couple appeared before him, and went down on their knees, by a preconceived movement, with the intention of reciting a carefully-prepared petition (not a word of which they could recollect at the critical moment)—I say when this happened he had turned both of them out of the house in a fury, and had vowed that he would never see their faces more. Every avenue of Mr. Piper's heart had been locked tight against the luckless couple. The front door had been, so to speak, fastened, the bolts drawn, and the chain put up. Nay, even the letter-box had been sealed, for showers of epistles had remained unanswered, if not even unopened. And now on this particular morning, as he walked along, Mr. Piper said aloud with a most determined air, "I won't." And when he said "I won't," he didn't

mean that he wouldn't fall down, because he fell several times, and generally immediately after he said it; but what he did mean was, that he would not open a fat little parcel which was in his pocket, and to which his hand occasionally glided as if involuntarily. And it was when his hand had got hold of it that he said "I won't," and then, as I before observed, he generally tumbled down.

Now, the little fat parcel had come by the post that morning, and the direction on it was written in a female hand well known to Mr. Piper, who, when he saw it on the table, uttered an expression which is generally spelt "psha" in books, but which it is difficult to reproduce on paper without suggesting to the reader an abortive effort to sneeze dismally. And then, I regret to say, he threw it on the floor.

The little parcel went down in a saucy, unconcerned sort of way, and lay on the carpet in full view of Mr. Piper, as he sat at breakfast. And the funny thing was, that whenever he took his eyes off it, they always went back again with a furtive, inquisitive look.

"What is it?" said Mr. Piper, soliloquising. "It can't be a letter. She could never have written all *that*. But it does not matter what it is, I *won't* open it."

It was rather a singular circumstance that he should pick up the little parcel and stow it away in his pocket almost immediately after saying this; and more singular still, that as he struggled along in the cold afterwards (still with the parcel in his pocket) he should think it necessary to say, "I won't," so often and with so much determination, as if, indeed, somebody else kept saying, "Yes, you will;" whereas, he was absolutely alone and free to make any