

Idle Hour Stories eBook

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Page 1

A Thrilling Experience

Might vs. Right

It is some years since I was station-master, telegraph-operator, baggage-agent and ticket seller at a little village near some valuable oil wells.

The station-house was a little distance from the unpretentious thoroughfare that had grown up in a day, and my duties were so arduous that I had scarcely leisure for a weekly flitting to a certain mansion on the hill where dwelt Ellen Morris, my promised wife. In fact, it was with the hope of lessening the distance between us that I had undertaken these quadruple duties.

The day was gloomy, and towards the afternoon ominous rolls of thunder portended a storm.

Colonel Holloway, the well-known treasurer of the oil company, had been in the village several days. About one o'clock he came hurriedly into the office with a package, which he laid upon my desk, saying:

"Take care of that, Bowen, till to-morrow. I am going up the road."

The commission was not an unusual one, and my safe was one of Marvin's best. I counted the money, which footed up into the thousands, placed it in the official envelope, affixed the seals, and deposited it in the safe. As I turned away from the lock, a voice at the door said:

"Say, mister, can you tell me the way to the post office?"

A sort of shock went through me at the unexpected presence that seemed to have dropped down from nowhere, and I replied irritably:

"You could not miss it if you tried. Keep straight ahead."

Soon large drops of rain came down, then faster and more furiously, till the air was one vast sheet of water, and little rivers leaped madly along the gullies and culverts. Forked lightning kept pace with the pealing thunder, and heaven's own artillery seemed let loose.

Anything more dismal or dreary could not well be imagined, and gradually the loneliness grew very oppressive. Every straggler had fled to shelter, and the usual idlers had deserted the platform.



But I resolutely set to work at the dry statistics of the station-books, with an occasional call to the wires, which were ticking like mad, so fierce was the electric current.

It was near five o'clock when a long freight train came lumbering by, switched off a car or two, then dragged its slow length onward. This created a brief diversion, then once more I was deserted.

The next passenger train was not due till ten o'clock. I lit the lamps and resigned myself with questionable patience to the intervening hours. An agreeable interruption came in the form of my supper, which was brought in a water-proof basket by a sort of jack-at-all-trades whom we called Jake. Shaking himself like a great dog, he "lowed there wa'n't much more water up yonder nohow."

"I hope not, indeed," I said, glad of the sound of a human voice. "Jake!" I called, as he left the office, "come back as soon as you can—I may need you."

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I had a vague idea of despatching some sort of report to Ellen that I had not been entirely washed away, and obtaining a similar comfort as to her own fate. I little thought how I should need him.

I think I am not by nature more timid than other men, but as the dismal evening closed in I took from my desk two revolvers kept ready for possible emergencies, and laid one upon the desk where I was making freight entries and the other on the table where the electric battery stood. At intervals a fresh package for the night express was brought by some dripping carrier, who deposited it, got his receipt, hung about for a few minutes, then hastened away to more comfortable quarters.

Still the rain poured in torrents. It must have been nearly nine o'clock when a wagon, hurriedly driven, pulled up suddenly at the platform. In a moment the door was flung open, and I saw a small ambulance well known about the village. Two men sprang out, and with the help of the driver and his assistant, proceeded to lift out a box which from its dimensions could contain only one kind of freight, to wit, the remains of a human being.

Carefully placing this box in a remote corner of the room, near other boxes awaiting transportation, the driver and his man returned to their wagon, while the two strangers approached the desk to enter their ghastly freight. They wore slouched hats and were very wet. They produced a death certificate of one John Slate, who had died at a farm house several miles away, of a non-contagious complaint, and was to be shipped to his friends down the road. This was all. There was nothing singular about it, and yet when the door closed upon the strangers and I was again alone, or worse than alone a feeling of awe came over me. Clearly the storm had somewhat unstrung me.

Only one hour till the train was due, after which I could turn in for the night.

A louder peal of thunder shook the house, and fiercer flashed the lightning. Minute after minute went by, and each seemed an age. The roar and din of the elements only deepened the gloom inside, where the uncertain kerosene lamp darkened the shadows.

Suddenly to my overstrained nerves the ceaseless clicking of the instrument seemed to say, "Watch the box—watch the box—watch the box." As a particular strain of melody will at times repeat itself in the mind, and obstinately keep time to every movement, till one is well-nigh distracted, so this refrain began to enchain every sense: "Watch the box—watch the box—watch the box." Till now my depressed spirits were due only to the solitude and the storm. No suspicion of evil or danger had tormented me.

Peering more closely into the dingy corner, I saw only the ordinary pine box, with what seemed to be a square paper, or placard, on the side facing me. Probably the address, bunglingly adjusted on the side instead of the top, or else a stain of mud from the late

rough drive. At all events I was not curious enough to approach more nearly the ghostly visitant.



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Ten minutes had crept by, when a muffled noise in the dark corner distinctly sounded above the pelting raindrops, while as if to mock at my quickened fears, the wires continued their monotonous warning, "Watch the box—watch the box—watch the box." I did watch the box, and now as if by inspiration I grasped the situation. There was indeed a man in the box, but not a dead one. A living man who had boldly lent himself to a plot to rob or murder me, or perhaps both.

I remembered the straggler who had surprised me while at the safe, several hours before. He had doubtless followed Col. Holloway and witnessed the money transaction. Quick and fast flew my thoughts in the startled endeavor to grasp some plan of action. Single-handed I was no match for any man, having recently recovered from an attack of malarial fever. This one in the box (if indeed there was one) must mean to secure the prize before the train was due, and escape the consequences. He must have accomplices, and these were doubtless on watch, either to give or receive a signal. At least it was not probable that he would undertake the job alone, and the fact that he had confederates had already appeared.

Perhaps the sight of my pistol had delayed the attack. Perhaps some part of their plan had miscarried and caused delay. At all events I must be cool. I fancied I saw his eyes through the dark patch on the box. I was almost sure he was slowly lifting the lid. There was no help near, and much might be done in the time still to elapse before the train was due.

Quietly walking to the battery, I feigned to take a message. In reality I sent one to the conductor of the on-coming express, as the only device whereby I could secure assistance, and this would doubtless come too late. Yet it was all I could do just now.

With every sense on the alert I arose to secrete my key if possible, when the door burst open, and Frank Morris, my future brother-in-law, rushed in, followed by a huge dog that was Ellen's special pet and attendant.

"Confound you!" said Frank, spluttering about and shaking himself as vigorously as the dog. "I'll be blowed if I ever go on such a fool's errand as this."

"Why you are pretty well 'blowed'" I said, with a poor attempt to be funny, but immensely relieved.

"I never was so glad to see anybody in my life!" and I meant it.

"There it is," he said; "make much of it" as he cleverly flipped a little white missive over to me. "Such billing and cooing I never want to see again. Regular spoons, by jove! Can't go to sleep till she knows you have not been melted, or washed away, or something. And Cato must come along to see that her precious brother doesn't get



lost. Ugh! Lie down over there, old fellow!" Then to me he said; "Here help me out of this wet thing."

But I was engrossed just then, so ridding him of the offending garment, the broad-shouldered young athlete strode about the room in mock impatience.



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“Heavens! what a night!” he exclaimed. “What time does your train pass? Ten? Just three minutes. I guess I’ll stay; but we will have that young damsel floating down here if she doesn’t hear pretty soon.”

“Hello, Cato, what’s the matter?” as the dog gave a low growl, “what’s that in the corner, Bowen?”

The dog continued to growl and look suspiciously as the young fellow rattled on. “That,” I said, “is a dead man.”

“Humph!” he laughed. “Jolly good company for such a night. I say, Bowen, you’ve got a nice toy there,” and he took up the pistol that lay on the table. In the meanwhile I had scrawled on piece of paper, which I had quietly placed near the pistol: “The man in the box is a burglar. Be ready for an attack.”

“Oh that’s the game!” he said aloud, and instantly strode across the room, as Cato sprang up and barked furiously at the box. Simultaneously the top of the box flew up, and uttering a shrill whistle, the man sprang to a sitting posture, while through the wide-flung door the other two ruffians appeared with pistols cocked, At once there began a deadly struggle. The dog had leaped upon the box and knocked the “dead” man’s pistol out of his hand, as Frank shouted, “Toho Cato!” unwilling that the dog should tear him to pieces, but wishing to keep him at bay.

“Your keys!” yelled the other men; “or by heavens, you’ll drop!”

Instantly closing in, man to man, the fierce struggle went on amid shouts, oaths and pistol shots.

“Call off your cursed dog!” screamed the “dead” man continually.

The encounter, which had occupied scarcely a minute, was at its deadliest, both Frank and I endeavoring to disarm rather than kill, when the whistle of the train sounded, and in another moment the conductor and his men were among us, “Seize that scoundrel!” shouted Frank breathlessly, indicating the man in the box. “Here Cato!” and the obedient animal unwillingly retired, but continued his savage growl.

At this juncture my man fell to the floor, badly wounded in the leg, and uttering groans and imprecations. It was quick work to secure the men, and Jake, who opportunely reappeared, was sent to summon the village police. Some of the passengers, impatient at the delay, had got wind of the adventure, and now crowded into the station in no little excitement. The box was found to have a false side-piece next to the wall, which was easily pushed down by the man inside, for greater comfort in his cramped position; and there were besides a number of air holes. It was the moving of the side-panel that caused the muffled noise I had heard.



I was questioned in all possible ways, and the curiosity of the passengers was fully gratified amid the clamor of the prisoners, who continually swore at each other. "What did you wait so infernal long for?" said one of them, glaring at the "dead" man.

"What was your infernal hurry?" retorted the other, sarcastically.

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It was plain from the quarrel that ensued that the sight of my pistols and my evident uneasiness, together with effect of the fearful storm, which confused all signals, had unsettled the fellow's plan, and had robbed him of his presence of mind. While puzzling as to the safest course, the sudden entrance of Frank and the dog had precipitated the catastrophe.

The men were conducted to the County Jail, and I was the hero of the hour, although I could not claim much credit for personal valor in the matter.

Was it Fate or Providence that befriended me? But for my presentiment, or what ever it might be, I should have urged Frank's immediate return to my anxious betrothed. But for her loving anxiety he never would have come down on such a night. But for the dog one of us must have been killed. And first of all, but for the instinctive sense of danger the telegraph wires would never have spoken a warning to my excited fancy; and this manifest feeling of apprehension, though I strove hard to conceal it, held the man in the box at bay.

The practical result of the episode was a more commodious station-house, and more men on duty. My salary was raised; but eventually I gave up the situation because my wife could never feel satisfied to have me perform night work after the fearful experience I have related.

As to Frank, he is not backward with explosive English whenever the subject is mentioned, and no amount of persuasion could ever reconcile Cato to the station-room.

A Cluster of Ripe Fruit

CHARACTER STUDY

They were five sisters, all unmarried; they lived in the old Dutch town that was made memorable by Barbara Frietchie's exploits. They never hoisted a Union flag, or did any grand thing; but they deserve a place in story just the same. Their name was Peyre, and the young people called them "The Pears", not in derision, for the regard they inspired was little short of veneration. Their ages ranged from sixty-five to eighty years when I first knew them. Unlike the Hannah More quintette, they were not literary. But no hive of busy bees was ever more industrious than they in the line of purely feminine accomplishments.

"The Pears" were not poor, but they were frugal. They owned a comfortable two-story brick house on a quiet street, and let their ground floor to a small tradesman. The way to the sisters led along a smoothly-paved side alley, all fenced in, through a little kitchen with spotless floor and shining tins, up a narrow, crooked, snow-white stairway, and finally through funny little chambers, up two steps, or down three, till the workshop was



reached. There they sat, clean and fresh and busy, each in her own nook; and just there they might have been found every day these sixty years.

The workshop had the appearance of tidy fullness. An everlasting quilt was stretched across the end window, and here Miss Becky had laid her chalk-lines and pricked her fingers through several generations. The faithful fingers were brown and crooked, she said, from rheumatism; but how could they be straight when eternally bent over the patchwork? Surely the quilt was not always the same; yet the frames were never empty, and the chair was never vacant.



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Miss Polly was housekeeper and cook, with Miss Phoebe to run errands, do the marketing, visit the needy, and supervise generally. Some one must have done the mending and darning and laundry work, but I never saw any of that.

Miss Sophie (the sisters said Suffy) was the knitter and her needles were never still. Always a gray yarn stocking, and never any appearance of the finished pair. Go when you would,—and the dear ladies were not alone many hours,—the knitting was on and going on.

Miss Chrissy was the beauty. Ages ago there had been a tradition of a lover, but nothing came of it. Perhaps they had all five lived out their little romances—who could tell? A certain homage was paid to the beauty. Her once brilliant auburn hair had paled to grayish sandy bands that lay smooth under a cap which was always a little pretentious. Her dark eyes and smiling lips made the soft white old face passing fair. Miss Chrissy was the embroiderer and needle-work artist. Her treasures of scallops and points and eyelets and wheels, all traced in ink upon bits of letter-paper, were kept in a big square yellow box that was bristling and bursting at all points.

This box was marvellous. There could never have been but one other in the world; and that I had seen under my great-grandmother's bed, the bed that had its dainty white frill, and its glazed calico curtains of gay paradise birds. They were all of a piece and not easily forgotten. The box had seen hard service among the "Pears." It was cross-stitched up and down the corner's along the bottom and the top, and all around. It never occurred to them to get a new one. Like their old Bible, its places could be found.

I went, one frosty autumn day, to get a pattern for silk embroidery. Stamping-blocks and tracing-wheels were unknown quantities to Miss Chrissy. Her stumpy little pencil—and that, too, seemed always the same—had to do the transferring. She liked a bit of harmless gossip, dear soul; and the young girls of the town made a point of supplying the lack of a newspaper with their busy tongues. So she knew at once who I was.

"Oh," she said, with her kindly smile, "you are young Mrs. John: I remember when your husband was a babe. I think I can find it;—yes, it is down in this corner,"—rummaging in the yellow box; "here it is—the pattern your aunt,—Mrs. John, selected for your husband's first short dress. All the Hunt family were customers of ours. Mrs. John, she they called Aunt Lou, was a great favorite. She was rich, and had no children. Well, she came one day all in a flurry to get a pattern—a nice wide one she said, for little John's dress. He was the first baby, and they fairly idolized him. This is it. I recollect the wheel and the overcasting. It was—let me see—forty years ago, come this December. Now, this little scallop is as popular as any" and she fished up another, all full of needle-pricks. "Some ladies don't like much embroidery, but they want a little finish. This one trimmed a set of linen for Mrs. Senator Jones. It took me a good while to draw it. She don't like this turn in the corner, so I made up something else. You know I design my own patterns."

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Then resisting the temptation to give the history of the rest of her favorites, she put the box aside and turned her attention to the quart bottle in hand, with its strip of muslin stretched tight around it, over a bewildering collection of grapes and leaves. This was her method, and the admiring sisters thought it perfect.

That night I teased John's mother into hunting up the dress, and there was the identical pattern, edging the fine white cambric now yellow with age. She was amused at my report of Miss Chrissy.

In my annual journeyings to the old town I never neglected "The Pears." They always looked as if I had just stepped out for an hour, and come back. The carpet did not wear out; the stove never lacked luster; the tiny window-panes were always just washed, and the diligent fingers went on just the same. They had a quaint way not easy to describe. When one talked all the rest chimed in with little whispering echoes, to support the assertion; and yet they did not seem to interrupt. They were to me living wonders, so perfectly unspotted from the world, so earnest in their pigmy money-making, and so thoroughly united, I felt consumed with curiosity as to their inner life. They must sometimes put by the quilting and the knitting and the patterns.

"How do you interest yourselves evenings, Miss Chrissy?" I asked, half ashamed of the question.

"Oh, we read," she said, smiling her ready smile. "Yes, read," echoed Miss Suffy and the rest. "We read Sunday-School books, and our Bible, of course. Sometimes we don't go to bed till ten o'clock."

"Ten o'clock—o'clock—o'clock," assented the gentle voices. It was not silly; the smiling faces all wore the sweet, simple look of guileless childhood.

Miss Suffy's window overlooked a time honored graveyard, where gray slabs were tottering. Next to her beloved patterns and their varied experiences, Miss Chrissy liked to tell of scenes and memories suggested by these somber reminders.

"It was a very cold day, Mrs. John," (so she always called me), "when they buried your husband's uncle out there. Poor fellow! He was shot at Buena Vista. A cannon-ball took off both his legs, and went right through the horse he rode. He was a gallant officer. They thought at first he would rally. The surgeons did their work quickly, and he suffered little or no pain, but there was no chloroform in that day, and he died from the shock. The snow was deep on the ground, but it was a grand funeral. They've got a fine new cemetery out on the hill, but we never go there. Our dead are all here where we can see their graves."

"Graves," came the echo, they had all along nodded, or murmured, assent.



“One of the saddest funerals we have ever seen.” Miss Chrissy went on, “was a double funeral. Two young men, both only sons, were drowned in the river while bathing. Their mothers were widows. It was terrible. Two hearses and two long lines of mourners. There they lie—over there in that enclosure. They were cousins, and were buried side by side.”

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“The mothers, Chrissy!” mildly prompted the whisper, when the narrator paused.

“Yes, the mothers! one died of a broken heart, and the other lost her mind outright. She is living yet, an old woman, who regularly goes to the front door of the asylum every morning and takes her seat. If it is cold weather, she sits inside. She asks every one who enters if Luther is coming—that was her boy’s name.”

“Did you know the first Mrs. John Hunt, Miss Chrissy—my husband’s grandmother?” I asked, willing to change the gloomy subject.

“Just as well as I know you, Mrs. John. She was a beautiful little woman, I was very young at the time I am thinking of. She sent at night for an embroidered flannel I was doing. It was my first wide pattern, and it went slow. At 10 o’clock it was finished, and my father went with me to take it home. They were all going to Washington to the President’s ball—President Monroe, it was—and the trunk was packing. It was to go on the big traveling-coach. When I ran up stairs and knocked,—I had often been there before—she opened the door herself. ‘Oh, it’s you Chrissy,’ she said in her pleasant way; ‘come in child; don’t you want to see something pretty?’ And she showed me two elegant brocaded silk gowns, very narrow and very short-waisted, but stiff enough to stand alone.’

“She praised my work and said I was a good girl. Then she paid me the money and tied a little blue silk handkerchief around my neck for a keepsake. ‘There,’ she said, in her quick voice, ‘you may go.’ I did many other patterns for the family, but poor lady! she never saw me again. She had an illness and lost her eyesight. She was stone blind for many years. I have the keepsake yet. It is put away in the hair-trunk.”

The sisters were all in full sympathy, as usual. Thus I sat and listened scores of times, making a pretence of wanting a pattern,—anything to get Miss Chrissy story-telling.

In the centennial year I found “The Pears” much shaken from their even tenor. The relic-hunters had penetrated their omnium gatherum and offered fabulous sums for the quaint old bits they found there. One of them declared he must and would have these wonders for the New England Kitchen. But the sisters were outraged. Adroitly I managed to hint a desire to see those treasures inestimable, and then for the first time I moved from my accustomed seat, and they moved from theirs. The magnitude of their wrongs would admit of nothing like routine or monotony. The chairs were pushed back, and I saw five tall, slim figures standing erect, in straight black gowns, white kerchiefs and spotless caps. They were devout Lutherans, and their pew at the Sunday service was never vacant; but I had never seen them outside the workshop.



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We filed into the funny little chambers where were the high beds, with their steps to be climbed. What a wilderness of feathers and patchwork! Some of Miss Becky's work was there. The bureaus nearly to ceilings, ornamented with round glass knobs, had their little mirrors perched up above my head. The candle stands, with spindle legs, wore an antediluvian look, and the chairs were just as queer. The more aspiring ones were prim in starched antimaccassars. Even the footstools belonged to a prehistoric age. There was nothing costly or elegant, but so very ancient and even comical, I had never seen anything like it, anywhere. A few oil-paintings, hung in the very border of the huge-figured paper, were small, but evidently fine.

"These things were brought from Alsace," explained Miss Chrissy, as I commented freely. "Elsace is the way to call it—and we can't bear to have strangers meddling with what is sacred to us."

"Sacred to us," came from the procession behind.

At last, pausing before a huge hair trunk, they all gathered nearer, and when the lid was raised, they vied with one another in displaying the contents. It would take a great while to tell all that I saw, or their curious little speeches and words and assents. There were samplers in every style of lettering and color. The inevitable tombstone, with the weeping-willow and mourning female, was among them. Bits of painted velvet, huge reticules, bead purses; gay shawls, and curious lace caps—all showed patient handiwork. Gifts and souvenirs were plentiful, even to the blue silk keepsake of the first Mrs. John. Then came old-fashioned silver spoons and knives and tea-pots, heir-looms, they said, from the old country. A bit of coarse paper bore an order for supplies for soldiers upon the Commissaire at Nice, and was signed with the genuine autograph of the great Napoleon. Every article had its history, and rarely, if ever, was the little work-shop so long neglected as on that occasion. When the procession filed back, I took leave with somewhat the feeling of having been buried in wonderland, and suddenly resurrected.

Perhaps the shock of the dreaded vandalism was too much. Perhaps the excitement of the hair trunk struck too deep. At all events. Miss Becky grew to muttering over her quilt, and making long pauses. One day her needle stuck fast in the patchwork, and her head quietly sank to rest on the rolled frame. When I paid my next visit, they said, "You will find it very odd at The Pears's. Miss Becky is gone."

I did find it odd. The quilt was rolled forever, and the end window was empty. There was only the chair. Still Miss Suffy sat with her stocking, and Miss Chrissy with her patterns, placid and patient,—they were only waiting; yet working as they waited. Miss Polly sighed once in a while over her pans. Miss Phoebe still went to market and distributed small alms to the poor. Ripe in good works and in holy resignation were The Pears.



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“Our quilter is gone,” said Miss Chrissy. This time there was no whispered echo; only a gentle sighing all around. But some of the scallops in the yellow box were not without fresh adventures; and these I heard.

That winter, Miss Phoebe fell on the slippery little side alley. There were no bones broken, but she, too, sank to rest in the old gray churchyard.

It was three years before I went back. Then they said, “Miss Chrissy is alone.” Alone I found her. She was little changed. The brightness had merely gone from her smile. I noticed that her talk was less of her patterns, and more of the gray slabs. She no longer clung to the proud little boast, “I design my own patterns.” She was apt to tell what Suffy said, or Polly, or Phoebe, not forgetting Becky, our quilter.

“No,” she said, when I asked: “Polly was not sick. She said in the morning, ‘Chrissy, do you ever feel strange in your head?’ Next morning she did not wake up. Suffy was never as strong as the rest—her back was bad; so when she had a sort of fit one day, it was soon over.”

“You don’t—you can’t—stay here all alone?”

“No, Mrs. John, Henrietta is with me. You know Henrietta? She belongs to the people down stairs. I shan’t forget her kindness.”

“Are you very lonely, Miss Chrissy?” I asked, choking down the tears.

“No, not lonely. The dear Lord is with me; He will stay to the end. No, Mrs. John, not lonely.”

She had always refrained, in diffidence, or humility, from religious talk. I know it was from no lack of deep spiritual conviction. If ever the world contained a purer, sweeter sisterhood, I have not known it. Their work was homely, as their lives were secluded, but no one ever saw them idle or impatient. In one straight and narrow path they walked through earth’s temptations to heaven’s reward.

One of the last things she said to me was that I should take some of the choicest patterns to my western home, notably “little John’s first short dress edge.”

“You have been a helper to us in more ways than one. God will bless you, Mrs. John.”

“Is there nothing you would have me do now? Dear Miss Chrissy, do not hesitate to speak.”

She did hesitate. “I don’t think of anything. My papers have long been drawn up. Lawyer Thomas will attend to them. You know our little savings are to go to the Home for Aged Women.”



I never saw her again. Sitting one day, placid and patient, she fell asleep over the yellow box; and when they lifted the soft white old face, all was still.

The Ghost at Crestdale

AN ADVENTURE

“Here we are, safe and sound,” cheerily said the driver of the huge black ambulance, as he pulled up before the piazza of Crestdale, the beautiful villa whose tower had been tantalizing the travelers for several miles.



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A party of five descended from the wagon as the wide doors were flung open by the housekeeper, and a kindly welcome greeted them, as well as comfortable fires.

“My! how cold it is,” exclaimed a fresh young voice, as the speaker hurried close to the generous heater.

“Be careful, dear, or you will burn your coat,” warned an older lady, while a stalwart young fellow tenderly loosed the seal wrap in question.

Placing the fair wearer in a great arm-chair, he said: “There, Mademoiselle Jessie, be a good girl—if you can. Now, sister ours, what can I do for you?” turning gallantly to the other lady.

“Thanks, you foolish boy,” was the pleasant rejoinder; “look after those parcels and those live commodities shivering there.”

The live commodities were a maltese cat, a canary bird, and two raw recruits from Erin; and the “foolish boy” at once set about assigning places for people and things.

“There’s a kitchen somewhere back here; come along, Michael. All right, Katie, follow me, and fetch the menagerie with you.”

Duly installing them in their domain, the young man made his way back through the wide, chilly rooms that intervened, and joined the ladies who were fast making themselves at home.

“A trifle bleak this, isn’t it?” he said, rubbing his hands before the blazing logs. “But just take note of that fragrant beefsteak. Say, girls, I don’t see any table set anywhere;” and he looked ruefully around.

“Give us time, sir,” remonstrated the elderly lady. “Here is a move in the right direction already,” she added, as the housekeeper entered with the tea tray.

“Mabel, can’t we have muffins?” pleaded the young voice.

“Muffins! Not on such short notice; but you may have toast and eggs.”

“You’ll disenchant me with your enormous appetite,” chaffed the young fellow, and got a saucy slap for his pains.

“Riding hours and hours on that horrid train is enough to starve any one,” was the ready defense; “you only came from New York. Come on, everybody, while the steak is hot.” And they gathered round to do justice to the repast.



Mabel and Jessie Winthrop were orphan sisters, the one fifteen years the elder, and was mother as well as sister to her idolized charge. Her own life romance was a buried chapter, and now she was chiefly concerned for the happiness of the two young persons seated there.

George Randolph was a distant cousin, and was to be married to Jessie Winthrop in two weeks' time. They had come down to make ready the seaside villa, which was their favorite home. It stood upon a winding river close to shore, and commanded a view of the surrounding country for many miles.

It was an immense house, containing some twenty-five rooms, and full of unexpected niches, nooks, and crannies. It was kept furnished throughout, but was locked up in the winter months. An unlooked-for cold wave, speeding from the northwest, had made the coming of the prospective bridal party a somewhat dreary affair.

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A few happy touches here and there transformed the gloom into cheer, and it was with renewed animation that they arose from their repast an hour later.

George was to return to the city next day, but would run down frequently before the wedding day. Meanwhile this, their first evening, passed quickly and agreeably for all.

The ensuing week was a busy one. A whole army of sweepers, dusters and renovators were turned loose in and about the villa, and the good work went on with a will.

Michael took charge of a pony phaeton, and the sisters often drove in to the village shops, two miles away, where the nearest railroad station was. It was necessary, however, that Mabel should make a final trip to the city to purchase some articles, and she arranged her time so that George could return with her on the evening train.

“You won’t be afraid, darling?” was Mabel’s fond question, as she made out her list.

“Afraid?” echoed the other. “Why, no; what is there to be afraid of? It is perfectly safe here.”

“Yes, I know; otherwise, I would not leave you even for the day.”

“The house is big,” said Jessie, “but we have near neighbors. Besides, there’s Mike and Katie, and Mrs. Lawrence. Oh, I’m all right, Mabel dear.”

“See that the house is securely fastened;” was Mabel’s parting injunction as she kissed her sister goodbye. “Look for us at the sound of the whistle to-night.”

“Indade, Miss Jessie,” said Katie a little later, her face in a pucker, “indade it’s not right for the loikes af yees to be here all alone.”

“Why, Katie, what’s the matter,” laughed the girl; “you don’t call this being alone, do you?”

“Ah, but haven’t yees heard the quare noises in the tower, Miss Jessie? An’ shure there’s a ghost in this house—Holy Mother defend us!” and Katie piously crossed herself in real terror.

“A ghost, Katie! I’m ashamed of you. It is only the wind. It blows here fearfully. You might turn a regiment loose in the house, and they could scarcely make more noise than these big, rattling windows.”

“Arrah, me jewel,” protested Katie; “there’s a turrible walkin’ about in the tower ivery night these two noights. An’ didn’t yees hear about the awful murther in the town over beyant us an’ the murtherer iscapin’? Sich a quare murther, too, with the finger rings all



left on, and the money purse in the pocket. Ah, Miss Jessie, a murtherin' ghost won't niver be laid."

"You silly Kate!" said Jessie merrily. "Don't be afraid, I'll take care of the ghosts. We are all right."

After a cup of tea and a bit of toast, Jessie repaired to her chamber on the second floor and picked up some trifle she was embroidering, to beguile the time of waiting. Mabel and George would get in about nine, when they were to relate the day's doings around a good warm supper.

Katie was to follow and sit with her mistress, after she had done some righting up down stairs. Mike was bent upon routing an army of rats in the barn. Mrs. Lawrence had retired to her room with a nervous headache.



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The high winds from the sea had lulled, and for once the house was utterly quiet—so quiet that the stillness became oppressive. Meanwhile the young girl sat in her bower of luxury, softly humming a favorite air, and very happy in thoughts of her approaching marriage. While deep in her smiling reverie, a stealthy footstep distinctly sounded outside her door.

Raising her head, she had not time to feel a sensation of real fear, when cautiously her doorknob was turned and a head intruded itself which struck her as dumb as though Medusa had appeared, and drove the life-blood in a frozen current to her head.

The face was ghastly, the hair black and curling upon high, narrow shoulders, the figure slight and spare, and a pair of restless black eyes were glittering swiftly and cunningly around the room.

“Hist!” he said to the horror-stricken girl, softly closing the door and turning the key; and if Jessie had a distinct thought in that awful moment, it was of thankfulness that the winter dampness had so warped the door that the key would not fairly catch in the lock, —a bit of repairing thus far overlooked in the wedding preparations.

“Don’t be frightened,” he continued, in his sibilant whisper; “you will take care of me, won’t you?”

But the girl’s eyes only riveted themselves in more hopeless, helpless terror upon the apparition. Every muscle seemed paralyzed.

He drew a chair to the open grate as if the fire were most welcome.

“You see,” he said in his quaint, soft voice, “if they track me here they may hang me, and they would be wrong—all wrong. I did not intend to kill her, but she would not hold still.”

At this he gave a blood-curdling laugh, and the horrible truth burst upon the listener’s dazed senses. She was alone with a maniac. All the stories she had ever read rushed to her memory, and the only clear idea she had was the conviction that she must, if possible, humor his vagaries till help came. She was a petted, spoiled darling, but she had great strength of will, and she now called it into requisition.

She hurriedly glanced at the clock, and calculated how long it would be before the train whistle could signal the coming of her dear ones. Alas! it was just eight. What, oh, what must she do? Of whom did he speak? Kill her? Kill whom? Then the mystery of the murdered girl darted into her mind. Katie had been right then. There was in truth a murdered girl. Was this awful creature her slayer?

Suddenly, with a confidential gesture he bade her sit down with him.



“I’ll tell you about it,” he said; “if she had only kept still! But she screamed and tried to run away, I can’t stand noise!” He clapped his hands over his ears as if to shut out the echo of it. “I must have this blood—this pure, young, life-giving stream. But she would not listen to me. Poor thing! It was too bad, wasn’t it? Hey? Speak!” and he grasped her delicate wrist with a grip of steel.



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Trembling at the sound of her own voice, the girl commanded herself to say:

“Yes; who was she?”

“I don’t know,” he replied, seriously. “She was beautiful and fresh; she was almost as fair as you,” letting his wild eyes roam over her. “I was getting away from that cursed place. Think of confining a man of my learning in a madhouse! But that was just it. I had mastered the new theory—the transfusion of blood. They wanted to steal my glory, so they locked me in. But I outwitted them; I captured these and ran away.”

Laughing wildly but still under his breath, he took from his jacket a black case of bright, new surgical instruments.

“These were what I needed,” he continued, with a low chuckle; “I could not attain the goal without these beauties.” Caressingly he went over them. “Lancet, probe, trocar, bistoury, tourniquet,”—mentioning the collection, while he passed his fingers affectionately along the small sharp knives.

“For years and years,” he went on, “I have studied this theory. The only thing is to find a young, strong, healthy subject; I found her. I was hiding in the bushes; she was on the highway; but she would not listen to me.”

“You did not kill her?” the girl forced her dry lips to ask.

“Nay, nay; that is an ugly word. I had to sacrifice her—I did not kill. Then the foolish mob came and I fled hither. But I had a bit of bread and meat; she dropped her basket of lunch. I’ve been hiding in yonder tower,” pointing upward. “I thought I might find what I want; and now, my dear, you will help me, won’t you?” This he said coaxingly.

“Help you? What can I do?”

“Such a simple thing. Hold very still while I draw the rich red blood from your pretty white throat.”

“You would not spoil my throat?” pleaded Jessie in winning tones, with the courage born of despair; “such a very little throat,” clasping her soft fingers about it in unconscious paraphrase of King Hal’s hapless queen.

“But where else can I find the glorious stream so rich and red?” he argued, with a perplexed frown. “It must be transfused into my own veins, that I, too, may be young again.”

“But not the throat! I could not sing any more then.”



“Ah, so—I heard you singing; it was not loud; it pleased me. Yes, ’twould be a pity. Well, I’ll tell you what I will do. I’ll open a vein in your arm—just here,” laying his finger on the round white member. “This will quicken the nervous centers. Then I will cut my own arm and insert your blood at the opening till the two life-currents mingle in one stream.”

He paused and reflected a moment. The generous warmth of the fire, together with the terrified girl’s enforced quiet manner, were evidently soothing to him.

“Listen now, very closely: Here is my greatest scientific discovery. I do not mean to impart the secret to another. It is the *transfusion of brain!* Some other man’s head got on to my shoulders, and my brain is all wrong. Now with your red blood charged in my veins, and your young active brain absorbed into my own uncertain head, I shall find the elixir of life, and you will not have lived in vain.”



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Gracious Heaven! Did she hear aright? She had submitted to blood-letting once to gratify an old family physician, who insisted upon the remedy; and she felt almost brave enough to endure the operation again, if it would only kill time and satisfy her tormentor. But to cut into her brain! Merciful God! What should she do? She could not escape, for he watched her with cat-like vigilance. Scream she dare not, for so did the other frightened victim. She *must* try to gain time.

With a rapt expression he continued: "Since the days of Esculapius there has been no such transcendent theory as this which is to make me famous. All my weary nights of thought and days of study are to be rewarded at last. Come child, are you ready? It will not hurt you. Only a little pin-prick, and no pain. I would not pain you my dear."

What if he should let her bleed to death! Oh sister, oh lover, come, or she would die of horror, if not the knife! And Katie—why didn't she come! At this moment the sound of the train whistle in the distance broke on the stillness of the night. How could she gain ten minutes more? The man had not noticed the sound.

"What do you wish?" she asked sweetly, "What shall I get for you?"

"Only a handkerchief and a basin," he replied coolly, still fingering a sharp lancet. "You are not afraid? Good girl; now for my crowning victory!"

As a sleep-walker she procured the articles and bared her arm. Tenderly he was binding it above the blue veins, when she said in winning tones:

"Let me tell you how I think would be the best way to do this—may I?" and she fixed her large eyes upon him in entreaty. He paused, and she continued:

"Now let me tie your arm in the same way. You open your own vein with the lancet, then open mine, and quickly after mix the two while the blood is warm. Do you see? You can't fail if you do it that way."

He looked at her. She did not flinch.

"Perhaps you are right; very well."

She arose as deliberately as she dared and went to her dresser for another handkerchief. At the moment she opened the linen case her ears, strained to the utmost, caught a murmur from below stairs. Turning quickly to see if the man also had heard, the door was pushed open and Katie's neat cap filled the aperture.

* * * * *



“Get on as fast as you can, driver,” said George Randolph, as he and Mabel took seats in the village stage. Then turning to his companion, he said in reassuring tones: “Don’t be frightened, dear; she is all right.”

“I know it is foolish,” said Mabel, half crying; “but those wretched placards made me nervous, and all that talk about escaped murderers and lunatics. I am fairly beside myself; do hurry!”

As the wide portals of Crestdale appeared, Mabel cried, in sudden terror:

“Something is wrong, George; see how dim the lights are! She would never welcome us like this. Don’t wait to ring; open the doors!”



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As George fitted his key in the lock and swung wide the door, a shrill scream from above made their blood curdle. Shriek upon shriek followed, as Katie came bounding down the stairs, almost knocking backward the two who ran past her to Jessie's room. White and lifeless they found her, prostrate, her arm still bound with the handkerchief. She had risen nobly to the awful emergency, but succumbed when relief came.

In vain Katie continued a shriek that a murderer was in the room. The anxious watchers bent over their stricken darling, who was now lying on her own bed and beginning to show signs of life.

Before they could ascertain what had happened, for Katie was crazed and incoherent from fright, a furious ringing of the bell sounded long and loud. Michael opened the door to a party of men who were in pursuit of a strange-looking person whose face had been seen at the tower window; whether an escaped lunatic from the state asylum, or an escaped murderer for whom a large reward was offered, remained to be proved.

The search was instituted with George Randolph at the head. The victim was soon unearthed, but in a moment, laughing wildly in the frenzy of madness, he darted out upon the roof and, rather than be captured, dashed himself to the pavement below.

All night they sat beside the brave girl, and bit by bit heard her story. For days she was ill from the shock of her fearful experience. The wedding was very quiet, but George refused to have it deferred.

It was months before the bride could summon courage to live at Crestdale, and she was a much older woman before she could refer with composure to Katie's murderer's ghost.

Her Christmas Gift

A WHITE RIBBON STORY

She was born on Christmas Day, and so came, with her little white face and solemn eyes, into her pale mother's life. She was worse than fatherless. The beast of a man she might have come to call by that sacred name, would now be beside the snowy cot, weeping in maudlin rejoicing over his new treasure, if the mother had not resolutely put him away some six months before.

The world knew him as Judge Barrett, a man of fine family, superb talents, and a magnetic orator. He might be, perhaps, too convivial on occasions, but was not this a common frailty among Kentucky's great men? The wife knew him as besotted and disgusting. What mattered his learning, his eloquence, his aristocratic blood, or ample income? To her alone he brought his degraded mass of humanity day after day; and though never personally unkind to her, or to the little boy that died, she was enabled by the might of her tearless agony beside that tiny bier, to cut the last tie that bound her to

the blear-eyed creature sobbing on the other side. The last tie? Ah, woe was she! The coming time brought into her desolate life the frail link she must now take up; and in the first bitter realization of her wronged womanhood, the mother-love lay dormant.



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As the months went by the little Ruth twined herself in every fiber about that lonely mother's heart, till she was loved with a love that was pain. So jealously guarded, too, that never once had the father's eyes fallen upon her, not even by chance. In vain he sent appeals just to look on his little daughter; he would ask no more. He was refused, and the baby's nurse did not dare transgress.

By-and-by Ruth was old enough to understand; and then she wanted to know who her papa was, and why he never came home as Masie Morrow's did. At this her mother would be terrified, and clasping her treasure close, would tell her she must never ask about her papa; he was a dreadful man.

"Like Jack, the Giant-killer, mumzie?"

"Oh, my dearie, he is a great deal worse."

Again Ruth said; "I know, mumzie, my papa is a great black thing like the pictures on the circus papers!"

So it came to pass that Miss Ruth fell to thinking about her father till it got to be a sort of mania with her—wondering and wondering what it all meant. Her life was secluded, but she was fondly attached to her grandparents and to a number of friends who were received at the house, while her mother was most tenderly enshrined in the faithful little heart.

The mother had a comfortable income, and provided her little girl with the best masters. She was a quaint, white-faced, solemn-eyed creature, as she had been from the first. She said "old" things, her black nurse declared, and she knew her little "missy" was under a spell. If so, the spell was tempered by an almost idolatrous love on the mother's part.

When she was getting to be a romping big girl, she had just as queer ways; too old for a child, though the sober, owl-like look began to soften to an earnest expression, which on occasions verged upon a twinkle in the deep blue eyes. Distant friends were now writing letters of inquiry, and her father's relatives persistently urged Mrs. Barrett to send the child to them for a visit. At last she took Ruth and went; she would not trust her out of her sight. She was a pale, pretty, gentle-looking woman, with a will of iron. It was to Judge Barrett's sister, Mrs. Stanton, in a neighboring town, that they came. They were afraid to mention his name, or hint at a possible reconciliation; but they managed to make the young Ruth very much in love with her new aunt, and merry, pretty cousins.

Meanwhile her father had gone from bad to worse, a confirmed drunkard, though rarely too far gone to make an eloquent stump-speech when occasion required. So popular was he that he had the sympathy of the community in his domestic estrangement.



Some said his wife was too hard and unforgiving; all agreed that he should have been permitted to see his child.

Ruth was seventeen years old and had long since exerted her filial influence to the extent of going to her aunt, Mrs. Stanton, whenever she wished. She had come to be quite a sensation in her father's native village, his hosts of friends readily tracing a likeness to himself. She was a sweet, rather wilful maiden, not exactly pretty, but very refined and attractive.



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Judge Barrett had always found a bed at his sister's, no matter at what hour of day or night he chose to stagger in; but the large family combined efforts to prevent the contretemps of a meeting between him and Ruth. Their promise to her mother was too sacred for trifling, and they loved the girl too well to risk being deprived of her society. Destiny, or chance, was too strong for them. It was on a bright, sunlit day, when Ruth was in an animated discussion with her cousin Roger upon the merits of Vassar College, recently thrown open to young women, which he declared was only a place where they transformed a girl into a boy.

"Never go there, Coz, if you wish to retain an iota of your womanhood."

"Prejudice, prejudice;" she retorted. "I do believe in the higher education of women and I am certainly going to Vassar, if I can persuade my mother to part from me so long."

"Why not take her with you?" Mrs. Stanton was saying, when horror of horrors, there appeared at the side door of the large sitting-room a flushed and tangled-looking creature, tottering and righting up alternately. All eyes were turned upon him, and every voice was dumb. Steadying himself within the door, he slowly surveyed the young faces grouped there, till his bloodshot gaze fell upon Ruth's white, wondering countenance. Perhaps she reminded him of the wife who had repudiated him. Perhaps some dawning instinct was at work. He staggered up to the girl, who never once turned her eyes, and placing a hand upon her head, said in the words of Childe Harold: "Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child?"

Tears sprang to every eye; but Ruth, first gasping as with a revelation from some long-dormant recess of her brain, arose, and catching his hand as it fell powerless, burst out:

"*Who* are you? Are you my—father? Oh, tell me!" she appealed to the group about her—"my father?" and stood breathless before him.

The word seemed to sober him with a mighty shock. He sank upon his knees, her hands still clasping his, and burying his hot face in her cool palms, murmured in choking accents:

"Her father—my child—my God, I thank thee!"

But the strain was too much. In a moment more he sank all in a heap upon the floor, limp and lifeless.

Passionately the girl knelt beside him, and looked searchingly into his now colorless face, while the others hastened with restoratives. Nor did she leave him during the days of illness that followed, except when obliged to rest. Little by little they had told her the story.



She only said: “Oh, I never dreamed he was like this. I used to think he must be something inhuman, horrible. Then I found myself staring at every stranger, especially if he was monstrous, or in the least hideous. But I had given up all hope, and was afraid to ask.”

“No, my dear child;” soothingly said her aunt, “your father is not horrible, or hideous except that he is the slave of drink. He is not inhuman, but a tender, loving creature. He is a gentleman, cultured and learned. There is nothing fine in the language he cannot repeat, so wonderful is his gift of memory. Oh, my child, can you not—will you not help him? You can win him, I feel sure.”



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Ruth learned to love her father by reason of his idolatrous devotion to her, as well as the powerful influence of his brilliant talents. In those first days of convalescence he followed her feebly from room to room, drinking in the joy of having her after the privation of years; and one day folding her to his breast said:

“My precious child—my beautiful daughter—hear your father’s vow! Come what will, nevermore shall a drop of the accursed fire pass my lips. I will redeem our name—I can and I will.”

He kept his word. Ruth went to Vassar. She wrote long, loving letters to her mother and father every week of her school life. Once she said to her mother:

“You know what I wish, my darling mamma. You know that I long to unite my two beloveds; but never shall I ask it. You must follow your own heart. I believe my father will be worthy of us; I shall be guided by you alone.”

At first the mother was stricken down by the fierce throes of jealousy and pain that rent her soul; but as time went on and she knew that she was not supplanted, she grew quiescent. But she owned to herself that she never could have sent Ruth away if it had not been to separate her from her father as well.

On every side his praises were sung in her ears. He was rising higher and higher in his profession, and one enormous fee in a contested will case, had suddenly made him rich. Both were getting on toward middle life, and he was slightly gray; but her brown hair lay in the same soft, glossy bands, and her pure white face was placid as of yore.

Four years had passed, and Ruth’s birthday was at hand. Her mind had long been made up; and now Christmas light and gladness reigned supreme. It was just at the close of the day when entering the fire-lit room upon the arm of her tall, distinguished-looking father, she threw her arms about her mother and whispered three words,—“For our sake!”

Then kneeling with courtly grace before her, he kissed the fair hand he had won in his youth and in tones whose music had thrilled her girlish heart, he spoke:

“My beloved, will you not trust me again? See—our darling has saved us for each other.”

And the last ray of the roseate sun lingered lovingly on the three as the evening sank into blessed night.

In a Pullman Car

A LOVE STORY

It was rather late when Hervey Leslie threw the remains of a cigar from the car window, and staggered through the jumping, jerking Pullman to his berth.

The curtains were all drawn, giving to the car a funereal aspect, and lights were turned down for the night.



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Jerk, jerk, jolt and jump went the train around the mountain curves, till the various hats and wraps suspended from the hooks seemed about to tumble together. Suddenly something dropped through the curtains of the upper berth opposite and lodged there. Involuntarily extending his arm to catch it if it fell, our young traveler's eyes were riveted upon an object which he now felt inclined to catch, whether it fell or not. It was a small white shapely hand—a woman's hand; and the midnight trespasser would have been less than human if he had not risen to a better view. There it was, just peeping between the heavy curtains, white and blue-veined, with tapering fingers and shell-like nails. How he longed to touch it! How tempting the rounded curve of the small wrist.

A prolonged lunge threw him violently forward, when grasping the rod to save himself, his lips went plump against the coveted object. It was only momentary, but it thrilled him as with an electric shock. When he recovered his equilibrium the fair sleeper had withdrawn entirely out of sight, and her involuntary assailant addressed himself to the duty of disrobing. Long he pondered upon the "touch of a vanished hand," and at last fell into uneasy dreams wherein the world had come to an end, and he found himself at the gates of heaven, with five soft white fingers turning the key on the other side.

"Last call for breakfast," shouted the porter next morning, and the confusion of voices mingled with the noisy folding of vacated berths.

Parting his curtains, Hervey Leslie peered out, possibly to catch a morning view of the pretty hand.

"By Jove! better still!" was his smothered comment, as he hastily turned away.

What he had seen was the perfection of a French boot, buttoned high, and protruding modestly below the curtains. Then a soft voice called—"Porter, I should like to get down."

The steps were adjusted, and as she gently fluttered down, the listener thought—

"What a shame I didn't have a chance to exchange berths with her! To think of her being perched up there!"

An hour later Leslie returned from his cigar to find the Pullman in order, and the refreshed occupants enjoying the books and papers scattered about. It was not possible to mistake the owner of the hand and foot, whom a glance revealed in her corner, looking quietly upon the hurrying villages and farms. A coquettish hat rested lightly upon a fluffy mass of golden brown hair, a dainty tailored suit fitted closely the rounded figure, and the face that looked out of the window was sweet and bright even in repose. The coveted hand, in spotless kid, shielded the earnest eyes from the glare of the morning sun, and all in all, the picture was one to tempt any looker-on.



Just as Hervey Leslie was puzzling his brain for a pretext, however flimsy, to introduce himself, a lady came from the dressing-room and sat down beside the beautiful unknown—a lady still young and handsome, and so closely resembling the girl as to leave no doubt that they were mother and daughter.



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“What has Charlie done with himself?” was the pleasant question, met with a smile so bewitching that the watcher was hopelessly ensnared.

“So, there’s a party of them,” he mused. “And who the deuce is Charlie?”

But when that youth appeared he proved to be only a brother, and not a very big brother, at that.

Settling himself back in a corner from whence he could use his eyes and ears as he dared, young Leslie drew forth a letter which he perused with interest; in fact, he already knew it by heart. It ran thus:

“My dear son,

“Congratulate me. The all-important day is fixed for the 24th inst. Come at once. Mrs. Dana is anxious to cultivate you, and my own impatience is an old story.

“Your affectionate father,

“H.J. *Leslie.*”

“Confound Mrs, Dana!” was the son’s comment, for upon the subject of his father’s second marriage he was distinctly undutiful.

For a while he lost himself in pictures of the new home, and mentally resolved to absent himself as much as possible. He knew how his opposition was grieving his father, who thought him most unreasonable: but he persisted in refusing to see the lady until after the ceremony.

Suddenly with a terrific lurch the train was derailed and plunged down an embankment, not steep but rocky. The heavy Pullman toppled over, then planted itself firmly in a bed of fresh earth, and was still. There were wild cries of fear and pain, a loud crashing of glass lamps, and some wrenching of seats. Leslie fell into a pile of great-coats, and flung out his right arm just as the two ladies were dashed against him, and a sudden sharp twinge made him oblivious of everything.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself being pulled out of his corner, and realized by the agony of the motion, that something was broken somewhere. With one mighty protest against such vigorous handling, he relapsed into a dead faint. When he next opened his eyes he was lying between cool sheets in a pleasant room, and bending over him was the elder lady of the Pullman. The first bewildered look was rapidly merged into a frown of pain, as a sense of discomfort made itself felt.

“He is coming round, doctor;” said the lady.



Then to him she said;—"you must be very quiet. Your shoulder has been set. It is all right now. Heaven be praised that we did not kill you as we fell!" she added aside, and her sweet motherly face showed the sympathy he was in need of.

Then a voice at the door said timidly, yet eagerly,—“Mamma, come—Charlie wants you.”

The ladies vanished, leaving the doctor in charge.

Hervey soon gathered that they were at a farm-house near Columbus, Ohio; that Charlie had a broken leg, that his mother and sister, along with the others who had escaped injury, were stopping over to render service to the wounded.



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"Who are they?" he asked, curiosity getting the better of his pain.

"I think the name is Raynor," said the doctor; "Mrs. Raynor, Miss Eloise, and the youth, whose leg we set this morning. But say, young man, where are your people? Don't you want some telegrams sent? You are not likely to get away from here very soon."

Young Leslie groaned as he gave his father's address at Cincinnati, then exclaimed;—"See here, doctor, can't you stop this confounded pain? What the deuce is the matter, anyway? Do get me out of this."

The doctor gave him a soothing potion and bade him be quiet. He promised to send a nurse, then went to look after the more slightly injured patients.

Three weeks later found Hervey Leslie in dressing-gown and slippers, sitting beside Miss Eloise Raynor under a large shade tree, the young lady reading aloud from Tennyson's tender rhymes. At an open window in full view lay Charlie, still a prisoner, with his mother in close attendance.

Mr. Leslie had paid several visits, and assured his son that the only way in which he could repay him for postponing the wedding till he should be well enough to witness it, was by becoming reconciled to his new mother. At which the son smiled, for something had of late come over the spirit of his dream that predisposed him singularly in favor of weddings. A sort of low fever hung about him, which made it prudent for him to remain in the country; and he rather fixed the time of his departure when Charlie's leg should justify the whole party's leaving.

The young girl and her mother blamed themselves for his hurt and had paid him every kindly attention. He had gathered the story of the petted daughter, and in his enfeebled state their acquaintance made rapid progress. Even now it required no acute observer to surmise the ravages of the little god. No one interfered, and for once the course of true love seemed to glide smoothly on.

He had confessed his aversion to the prospective mother, and endeavored to elicit sympathy by picturing to young Eloise what it would be to have another fill her dear father's place. At such times her face was impenetrable, and he intuitively grew to avoid the topic.

Ere Charlie was able to get about, young Leslie had fallen in love with the whole family; and when he had sought and obtained the dimpled hand he had so coveted in the Pullman car, laughingly told the mother he was not so sure but that after all she was the one he loved best. A smile passed over the regular features as she said meaningly:

"Only love me as a son, my boy, and I think we can be happy in each other. But remember, a mother-in-law is a dangerous animal!"



Mr. Leslie was so happy in his son's good fortune,—for so he evidently considered it—that he declared there must be a double wedding.

“You shall have your way,” he added, with some pique; “and not see Mrs. Dana till we meet at the church. Afterward, I'll risk the meeting!”



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Some two months after the accident the programme was carried out. But the Raynors had remained at the farm-house till the appointed day, the young people growing all the while so distractingly fond of each other, that the really short time seemed to drag with leaden wings.

Quietly one morning, in the presence of intimate friends, and quite in the old-fashioned way, the two pairs of lovers walked up the church aisle to the minister in waiting. The ladies wore rich traveling-suits, and carriages waited to convey the immediate members of the family to the wedding breakfast. The younger bridegroom saw nothing but the sweet face at his side, though he started perceptibly when the service revealed that his father's bride and his own bore the same musical name of Eloise.

When the first carriage closed with a snap, there was a relaxing of ceremony, and an interchange of congratulations, earnest, though somewhat amusing. For when Hervey raised his eyes to the despised mother's face, he saw there the soft features of Mrs. Raynor, while his father smiled in contented expectancy. His own face was a study!

"Raynor?" he stammered. "Why I thought—I understood—"

"You said Raynor," was the teasing reply; "we never did."

"And whom have I married?" was his next question, with a grotesque grimace at the demure young person beside him.

"Eloise Dana, an' it please your lordship. Do you mean to get a divorce?"

"It's all right, my boy;" cheerily said his father, while all three heartily enjoyed the denouement. "It was only a little harmless plot, you know, to bring you to your senses! Besides, you were in too delicate a state of health to bear the truth!" This with decided relish.

"Bring me to my senses!" echoed the other. "You have about run me crazy! Here I've gone and married my wife's brother to his sister, and the fathers and mothers are all fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law. But, my dear mamma," he added, with an 'Et-tu-Brute' look at the amused lady, "I did not think you would play me false!"

"The temptation was too great," she confessed, "after I saw your name on the tell-tale suit case; own the truth now, that as Mrs. Dana, you would never have fallen in love with me!"

"Ah, well," he gave in, "let's kiss and make friends. As for you, young lady," he exclaimed with mock fierceness, "I shall exact the most implicit obedience. I must get even somehow."



“No—no—I did not promise to obey—brides never do nowadays,” and the little gloved hand went up to his lips in protest.

Catching it fast, he threatened to proclaim the first time her hand had ever touched his lips, all unconscious though she was, and amid blushes and happiness all around, they arrived at the house, where the whole story had to be rehearsed to delighted friends, beginning with midnight vision in a Pullman car.

In Old Kentucky



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A PRIZE STORY

Everybody was at Crab Orchard springs, that favorite resort in the ante-bellum days. What though the main rooms were cramped and stuffy, or that the straggling cottages across the grassy lawn were mere shells. It was a place thoroughly rural, thoroughly enjoyable. Merely to ramble along the winding saw-dust walks to the deep embowered springs, was a sufficient augury of improved health. It was the one daily excitement to crowd up to the long platform and see the stage come in, bringing high and low, the rich and moderate liver. The luggage was light, Saratoga trunks being unknown quantities, and no gowns were brought except those of the crushable kind that did duty at ten-pins, fishing, walking, dancing, and not least, driving, for the gravel turnpikes were fine.

Across the wide street was Bachelors' Row, where were installed hunters and hounds from the Southland, rich cotton and sugar planters, sporting men and their sable attendants. Here the candles burned all night, and there were loud whispers of games in vogue not as innocent as those listed on the tempting advertising circulars of the Springs. This sunny, summer life was of the *dolce far niente* sort, given up to idle pleasure, and quite out of the way of the tragic happenings of romance. Yet a mystery had managed to creep into this Arcadian realm, a thing not at first tangible, but getting to be an acknowledged first-class secret as the days went by.

Egbert Mason had been nearer the carriage than the rest of the sunset crowd when the stage rolled up, followed by the close, luxurious-looking vehicle so rarely seen in those parts. He declared he caught a glimpse of a being, exquisitely beautiful among the two or three closely wrapped and veiled women who descended from the carriage; and the young men were on the *qui vive* some hours later to see the new comers enter the ball room. But they did not appear either that night, or any other night. They kept their cottage rooms closely, sitting out only in the rear, and were waited upon by the two black servants they had brought. Various were the conjectures about them, and vague stories soon took shape. The hotel register told only their names: Mrs. Glencarron, Mrs. Hamilton and daughter, from Mississippi. The daughter was an invalid, and this was all that could be drawn from the faithful blacks. The girls pouted, and mamas looked unutterables when their curiosity found no relief; while the men were wisely silent, though equally diligent in fruitless investigation.

It was past midnight, and the lights were out, when the ominous cry of "fire!" sounded through the grounds, striking terror to the visitors thus suddenly startled from their sleep, and emptying the cottages of their half-clad occupants by one accord. A glance at the crackling flames showed that Bachelors' Row was on fire and doomed. Men from the distant village were soon on the spot with buckets, and amid frightened cries, confused questions, and a general hurrying, scurrying of feet, a few had presence of mind to cover the main building with wet blankets, lest the trees now snapping and hissing might drop a blazing brand and the whole place go down.



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After the first panic had subsided there was nothing to do but stand and watch the graphic scene; and while thus engaged the attention of some was attracted by a face white and drawn as with pain among the by-standers. It was that of one of the mysterious ladies of the southern cottages. But even as they noted the faded beauty and aristocratic bearing of the stranger she was hurried away by another figure closely wrapped and hooded. Not before she had ejaculated: "Oh, what is it? Is she——?" and there the words were lost.

It was somewhere near the early morning when Egbert Mason who had been foremost in fighting the fire, was aroused by a voice just outside his window, which was left open for the faint breeze of the summer night.

"Come quick iz you kin, young marster, fur de lub o'heb'n."

Between sleeping and waking the young man jumped up and peered out of the window. He could just discern the prim red and yellow turban of the black keeper of the strange ladies.

"Iz you a doctor, Marster? Dey says you iz."

"Yes—a very young one—what is wanted?"

The negress spoke a few very hurried words in a lower tone.

"All right. In one moment—stay—never mind—I have it—I'm coming." And catching up something from the shelf of his closet the young doctor sped away to the mysterious door of the southern guests.

He was met on the threshold by an anxious, grief-stricken face, and the words half sobbed out:

"Was there no one else? None older? You—why, you are a boy."

"True, madam, but I am not without experience. I hope—I think, you may trust me, unless——"

But she drew him hurriedly within the door, and on to an inner chamber, where lay his patient, so guarded that he never once saw her face. Before the earliest risers were called to the long breakfast hall there echoed the cry of a little child in the southern cottages—a girl baby that opened its eyes first in an atmosphere of secrecy and mystery.

* * * * *



Sixteen years had gone by. It was the eighth of January, and the Capitol Hotel at Frankfort was a blaze of military glory. It was the annual commemorative ball, and Strauss' band was pouring forth inspiring strains, as the dancers, in fancy costumes of every age and clime, flitted to and fro. The beauty, wealth and chivalry of Kentucky were there. The stars and stripes were draped about the speaking portraits of dead heroes, and munitions of war glittered on every side.

Among those wearing the neat broadcloth evening dress of the plain American citizen was Dr. Egbert Mason, the famous surgeon, now a distinguished looking man of thirty-five. It was rather late in the evening when he appeared, and he was soon captured by his friend, the Hon. Leslie Walcott, who bore the distinction of being the youngest member of the House, and presented to Miss Eleanor Carleton, the most popular of all

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the belles and beauties on the floor. Her dress was an exquisite personation of the stars and stripes, from the crown of stars on her golden brown hair, to the gaily ribboned white satin slipper. Her white muslin skirts showed the red stripes at intervals; a soft blue sarsenet sash across her breast was stamped with the outstretched wings of the American eagle, and in every detail this unique costume was alluring to a degree.

Dr. Mason was more than impressed by her extreme youth, in its setting of precocious womanly grace and charm. She was so happy and bright, a *sans souci* maiden whom he lost no time in winning to his own colors, by the magic of a well-stored mind and an eloquent tongue. A *sonsie*, sweet-sixteen lassie, not yet out of school, but wonderfully developed, like the southern girls of the period, whose parents were possessed of ample means. He sounded her fresh, rich stores of mind and found she had indeed been carefully taught, wisely trained. Not at once did he learn it all, but soon enough to resolve to win and wear this jewel, if only Providence were kind. Providence? Ah, there swept across his face the shade of one bitter memory—one foul wrong that had darkened his earlier manhood. A woman's fatal wiles, a man's trust betrayed. He forgot that she had vowed vengeance if it took a lifetime. He thrust it all aside, and turned to the purity and innocence of this fair young womanhood, with the infinite longing of a starved nature.

The evening of the ball did not close without another surprise for Egbert Mason. Eleanor Carleton was challenging him in a spirited quotation contest when her mother approached leaning upon the arm of the Governor of the State. She was a handsome, dark-eyed woman, young enough to seem the elder sister of the lovely girl who called her mother.

"Eleanor, my child," she said, barely glancing at her daughter's companion. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Have you been in the draughts of those halls? Supper is ready."

"Oh, I've been in very good hands," was the merry reply, as the girl introduced Dr. Mason, and shook hands with the Governor, who was looking down at her with his kindest smile.

"Madam," he said gallantly, "I must compliment you upon this exceedingly pretty and patriotic dress. I have been watching it from afar all evening. How could you conceive such a marked hit for the occasion."

"I hope it in order for me to say she never fails," proudly answered Senator Carleton, an imposing looking man, who had come up in time to hear the last remark. "The march is playing for supper—"



“Oh, mother—what is it?” cried the girl, suddenly directing attention to Mrs. Carleton’s face, which was colorless, almost ghastly, while her eyes seemed gazing afar off into space.

“Allow me,” said Dr. Mason, with concern, advancing quickly, and amid the excited gathering of the little circle about him, he gently bore her to one of the large windows, as the Senator in visible alarm threw up the sash.



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“To my room,” she murmured, as she revived a little, and thither they conducted her as quietly as possible.

At the door the startled young girl turned and impulsively clasping the doctor’s hand, exclaimed:

“Oh, Dr. Mason—what is the matter? I never saw my mother like this—is she going to be ill?”

He tried to reassure her, though the touch of her soft, clinging fingers set his blood dancing like wild fire in his veins.

That night old Ailsie knelt beside her mistress and soothed her with the crooning tones of her childhood days.

“Don’t you fret, Missie; he doan know nuffin’ ‘bout it now. An’ if he do he ain’ gwine ter tell nobody.”

That night, too, Egbert Mason, in dreams climbed a mountain height to reach an eagle’s nest. As he grasped the last wavering support a figure glittering with stars dropped from the nest, suspended by a tattered flag. Down, down it fell. Frantically he clutched at the frail colors. They lengthened more, and more, till the starry, shimmering form was swaying above a yawning abyss. Could he save her? Her—his young love with the appealing eyes? With one mighty effort he nerved himself for the desperate descent, when lo! from yon black depth appears the vindictive face of Isabella Drury. Older, careworn, faded—but still Isabella, and wearing the head of a Medusa.

* * * * *

“You shall never marry that girl, Egbert Mason! I have sworn it! If you attempt it I will kill one or both of you!” and the face of the speaker was like a mad woman. “Oh, I know all you would say,” she went on, striding about the rooms she had entered by strategy.

“But she shall not have you if I can not. Pshaw! What fools men are! Do you know who and what she is? Where is your boasted pride, that shrank from a thing like me! Let me tell you, then, you scornful, high mightiness! Eleanor Carleton is——” and she hissed the hateful word in his ears.

“Woman! You lie!” shouted Egbert Mason, stung to frenzy by her taunts, and sick unto death of her persecution. His was not a quiet nature, and she had touched him in his sorest point. “You lie, and you know it! Out of my sight! Tell all you will. I, too, can threaten. Your vile secret is still safe with me, but I shall find means to be rid of you—Go!”

“Stop!” she commanded, coming nearer and dropping her voice to a sibillant whisper. “Go back seventeen years to a summer night at Crab Orchard Springs! Aha! you start, I

see you have not forgotten. Do you recollect the part you played that night? *She is that child!*" and with a malicious laugh she swiftly passed from the room.



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The man sat stunned where she had left him. Could it be true? And what was the mystery of that far-away night of his youth? The more he pondered the more complete grew the chain. Senator Carleton had married a Kentucky girl, it was true; but her youth had been passed on a Mississippi plantation. He had years ago heard more or less idle gossip about the hard, miserly nature of the old planter, Hamilton, and of his bitter opposition to his daughter's match with penniless young Carleton. There had been an elopement, or something. It came back to him like some hideous nightmare. His pure, spotless darling—his promised wife! Could there be sin or shame enveloping such a being? He must know. He wrote to Mrs. Carleton. In earnest words of manly truth and honor he besought her to explain to him the past. Eleanor was visiting a friend in a distant city. No answer came. He went to the house and was denied admittance. He followed Eleanor only to learn that she had been hastily summoned home. That was not the day of rapid transit. He returned at last to find a letter of farewell forever—his beloved had been spirited away to other scenes. Then Egbert Mason left his native land, baffled, broken-hearted, and devoted the next three years to the study of special lines in his profession.

* * * * *

In a stately drawing room of an ideal Kentucky home are Eleanor Carleton and Egbert Mason, once more face to face.

"Oh, my love," he moaned, bending almost reverently before her, "what a mistake, I knew it all when too late. The letters were all found when that unhappy woman was sent to the asylum. Did you think I could change? 'Forget thee dear?'" he quoted unconsciously—he had said the lines so often;

"God knows I would not if I could:
For sweeter far has been to me the pain
Of love unsatisfied, than all the vain
And ill spent years I lived before we met."

Still she stood, gravely looking at him, her maturing beauty made the fairer by the sable gown she wore.

"Forgive me," then she spoke. "I thought you knew. I have been Leslie Walcott's wife these four months."

As he sat beside his solitary hearth there was a fumbling outside the door. He opened to admit old Ailsie, now crippled with rheumatic pains.

"I know'd dat was you. Marse Doctor, 'n I follered yer, I want to tell yer:—Mistress 'splained all 'bout dat 'fore she died. Dey wan't nothin' wrong. Her an' her ma was 'feared to let old Master know she hed run 'way an' married Marse Henry. He said he



wan't gwine ter will her nary cent. So mistess and her sister, Miss Ellen, arter while, dey fotch her up to de springs. Den ole master he died sudden like, an' Marse Henry, he had done ben 'way off to New Auleens—never know'd dey had fooled old Master 'bout de chile an' all dat. Po' Mistress! she nebber could tell him no better, and she was always skeerd-like arter she seed you agin. But she sot right down dat day and writ all about it to you an' I goes and gives de letter to dat purty white lady what was sich a good frien', and den she gimme yourn, ain——”



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“Yes, yes, Auntie, I know—I have the letters here——at last,” he added in low, husky tones.

* * * * *

The *Louisville Journal* of the next New Year, under date of January 9, contained the following notice, with lengthy editorial comment:

“Died suddenly last night, of heart disease, at the close of the Military Ball, at the Capitol Hotel, Frankfort, the Hon. Leslie Walcott, age thirty-two years.”

Did hope stretch out an alluring hand to one lonely reader?

His Gratitude

VENGEANCE IS MINE

“But surely you do not realize, Robert Garrett, that when you foreclose this mortgage you leave us virtually penniless;” and the large dark eyes of the suppliant were blinded by an agony of tears.

“Really, madam, I regret to seem hard;” and the polished courtesy of the cold, harsh voice fell with heavy weight upon her strained senses. “Your husband has had more time now than any law allows, human or divine.”

“Oh, how gladly he would have paid the debt;” she moaned; “it was his kindness and forbearance to others—kindness that seemed imperative. He could not take the law against his crippled brother, his mother’s dying legacy to him. You know all this—you know, too, that if you will only grant a little longer respite he can settle the claim, or the greater part of it. How then can you be so cruel as to drive us out of doors! You who need nothing of this world’s goods!”

The man of business stirred a little, crossed his well-clad legs in still greater comfort, and audibly repressed a yawn. Then as if unwillingly forced to say something he did it as ungraciously as possible.

“Again I say I grieve to proceed to harsh measures, but”—then as she was about to interpose he broke out irritably, “God bless my soul, Mrs. Blaine, how can you expect anything else! I am obliged to be accurate in my matters, otherwise there would be no end to imposition from shiftless men who are always going to pay but——never do.”

“This, then, is your ultimatum, sir? You will turn me and my children out wanderers from the old home where I was born—where I had hoped to die? Can you do this? Even



you, whom the world calls rich and prosperous and——charitable!” As she spoke she bent upon him in fine scorn her brilliant eyes dark and piercing.

“Painful things occur every day, my dear madam, in this transitory life. And once in a while the tables turn. I think I remember a time when I pleaded with perhaps not so much eloquence, but quite as much earnestness, for a boon at the hands of pretty Mildred Deering. I didn’t get it, and I have survived, you see. We are apt to magnify our misfortunes;” and a mocking smile told wherein lay the animus that was her undoing.

Then she drew her graceful figure to its full height, and with the contempt of an outraged wife and mother, her words came in tones of concentrated vehemence:



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“So! Robert Garrett, this is your vaunted Christianity! You, the immaculate pillar of the church—the friend of the outcast—the chief among philanthropists! Grant *your* boon? Was there ever a moment in her sheltered life when Mildred Deering would have consorted with the hypocrite you are? Never! Better a thousand times poverty with nobility and truth in the man she loves. Better an age of privation with Herbert Blaine than a single instant in the presence of such as you. Do your worst! And may God mete out to you and yours the mercy you have shown us!”

Clasping the hand of her little girl who had clung to her mother’s skirts, gazing with wide-open, awestruck eyes at the great man, she was gone in a moment.

“Ah!” uttered Robert Garrett in a long-drawn-out syllable, reaching for the evening paper.

There had been another silent witness of this scene in the person of a lad who stood within the door he had entered just as Mrs. Blaine had appeared in the opposite way. He was a rather ill-favored schoolboy, but his thoughts as he came forward with the lanky awkwardness of youth and took a chair in chimney corner, were not of himself or his looks.

“Father,” he said after some minutes had passed, the rattle of the newspaper and the measured ticking of the clock being the only disturbing sounds, “Father,” he repeated, this time with a falling inflection.

Startled uncomfortably at the unexpected address the father peered frowningly at the boy with a gruff, “What!”

“Do you think it is just the fair and square thing to turn ‘em out?”

“What do *you* know about it, you young meddler. Keep quiet about what does not concern you. You have enough to eat and wear—attend to your own business.”

There was no encouragement to go on, so young Robert sat and pondered till his father, chafing under the silent rebuke personified in every line of the son’s uncomely face, sent him to his room.

In the other house there was little sleep; and for many succeeding days the devoted Blaines, with heavy hearts, put by their idols one by one, till at last the time-honored oaken doors closed upon them in relentless banishment. It mattered not that amid new scenes prosperity once more opened her sheltering arms and kept the wolf from the door. The new owner of Deering Castle, as the villagers had admiringly christened the grand old place, refused to sell it. Robert Garrett, with the littleness born of a mean, cramped nature, clung to this coveted possession as the one thing to be held, though all else were taken. He had money but knew not how to enjoy it. His household, for the



most part, reflected the coarseness of his nature, and as time passed his retribution was meted out in rebellious sons and daughters, who wasted his substance and dragged down his name still further in the mire.



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Twenty years had gone by. Herbert Blaine and his bright-eyed wife slept in the city of the dead. With their latest breath they had, one by one, adjured their beloved daughter, the only surviving child since the civil war had laid low their three manly boys, to regain possession of the old homestead. Time, they assured her, would make all things even, and long before they laid down the burden of life, they had seen how the wife's curse beat upon the head of the man who had so oppressed them. They had learned to feel pity for him whom they had once despised. Not so Jessie Blaine. She was a woman now, and had been, for a few brief years, till death robbed her, a happy wife. But never could she forget that dismal twilight hour when her innocent eyes had photographed the hateful, sneering face of her mother's enemy; when her ears had phonographed his mocking words. The scene had haunted her waking and sleeping, for many days; and still after all these years she could and did remember.

She rejoiced when she heard that wild Ben Garrett had broken nearly every law of the decalogue, and was wrecking the peace of all who cared for him. "They richly deserve it all;" she said, when some fresh escapade or misdemeanor would come to light. He had squandered his father's thousands aimlessly, recklessly, and was fast bringing his white hairs in sorrow to the grave. Jessie Forrester only smiled as she read these items from the local press. Riches and honors were hers. There was nothing lacking but the dear old home of her people, and this could not be bought. She climbed to heights undreamed-of in her earlier days, and became a shining light in the world of letters. Her books were read in two continents. Statesmen and distinguished circles sought her till her name became a power in the land. Her influence was widespread. In an eastern city she at last came to revel in her books and manuscripts, or in her sweet, healthful, domestic loves, renouncing all thoughts of revenge, for the time being, and abandoning the hope of recovering the sacred pile where she first saw the light.

One day there came a letter bearing the postmark of her native town. With difficulty deciphering the straggling, tremulous address, she broke the seal and read as follows:

—
"Madam:

"A heart-broken father appeals to you in his hour of extremity, to save his son from the gallows. My boy—my wayward, reckless boy, who was once as innocent and pure as yourself, has fallen into the hands of treacherous natives and half-breeds in Arkansas, and they accuse him of murdering a traveller for his money. He is guiltless of this crime—God knows he is; but the weight of evidence is fearful, and I am powerless to refute it. The proceedings have been hurried over and the verdict is against him. "I am unable to go to him—I bring the case to you. Go, I beg of you, to Washington and plead with the congressman from this,



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your native district, and the Arkansas representative, who is your kinsman. Urge them to see the President and prevail upon him to sift the evidence. I realize most bitterly that I have no claim upon you, but oh, for God's sake, Madam, do what you can for a distracted father. Hanging! Oh, save him from that—and act quickly, for he has only five days to live. I am crazed with anxiety and sleeplessness.

“Your obedient servant,

“Robert Garrett.”

Jessie Forrester's hour had come. The revenge so ardently longed-for since the hour her mother had invoked the curse of heaven upon this man, was here. What though his boy did perish, by an ignominious death. A more worthless cumberer of the earth did not exist. Ah! that cold, sneering voice on the winter's eve so long ago; her mother's tears! As he had sown so should he reap, and her hands would help to gather in the harvest. Through him they had been exiled all these years from the home that was their birthright. The husband of her early womanhood might have been spared if only they could have nursed him back to health under the cool shade of those grand old trees instead of languishing in the hot city. Help this man? This incarnation of cruel selfishness? Not she;—his boy should suffer the extreme penalty of the law. How could *she* lift a voice to save him! “His boy?” Ah, through her tender mother's heart there darted a pain all unwonted. Her own noble, gifted boy—her all—what if untoward fate should have in store for him some doom of shame—him, her idol and her pride.

She sat buried in thought till suddenly starting up she consulted a time table, then rang hurriedly for her maid. She was ready in thirty minutes, and summoning her young son, was soon enroute for the capital. Arriving at ten o'clock she called a carriage and sped away to new northwest quarter of the city. By midnight she had seen both representatives and thoroughly enlisted their services. She gave no reason for her intercession, nor was it necessary. It was enough that she deemed it a case for intervention. Next morning the two statesmen had an interview with the President, and by the hardest, for the mass of evidence against young Garrett was overwhelming, got a stay of proceedings till the case could be further investigated.

Well-nigh exhausted from the mental and bodily strain, Jessie arrived at her home unfit for anything but rest. Then she answered her enemy's letter. Did she reproach him with his life-long injustice? Did she demand the old home in exchange for the service she had rendered? Or at least the privilege of buying it? She merely wrote;—

“I have been to Washington and secured a reprieve pending further sifting of evidence.”

Ben Garrett was saved and the close view of the gallows sobered him at last. He married the daughter of a Texas ranchman and Jessie heard of him no more.



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Five years passed away when on a gloomy afternoon in the autumn, Jessie Forrester, now a woman of thirty, and wearing her years and honors well, was sitting at her desk in an elegant sanctum, absorbed in the fate of two lovers whose history she was creating.

Her door opened and a grave, handsome man with a bearded face stood before her.

“Madam,” he said briefly “you once did my brother a great favor. I am here to thank you for it.”

His brother? A favor? Ah, she had been doing favors for many in all these years. She did not remember any particular one; it was an every day matter. Every mail brought petitions and she never turned a deaf ear. The doing of favors brought its own reward.

She looked steadily at the stranger, and he felt again in his inmost soul the gaze of those large brown eyes seen once before dilated with childish terror.

“My name is Garrett,” he explained, as briefly as before.

Garrett—that hated name. Involuntarily her eyes fell upon the work before her, while a warm flush mantled her cheeks.

“May I sit down for five minutes?”

She again raised her eyes without speaking, and he seated himself, not looking at but beyond her as if her steady gaze unmanned him.

“Madam, my parents are dead. I have come to offer you Deering Castle at your own price. I should not presume to suggest it as a gift. It is yours if you wish it. I have heard so often,” and here his voice fell for very shame, “that you wanted it. It was not then mine to dispose of; now there is no barrier; it is yours. I will send my attorney to you.”

Rising he lingered a moment with a certain wistfulness suffusing his features, then made his way out ere Jessie could recover sufficiently to bid him stay.

Her faculties were in a tumult. Deering Castle hers—the estate of her fathers—the venerated old home hers at last. It almost took her breath away. A Garrett was offering it. That name hated all her life. But did she hate it now?

There was no more work that day for the author. Nor ever again did her genius shine out in rapturing periods till she drew inspiration from the grand environment of the old homestead. Here Robert Garrett is not an unwelcome guest. Young Herbert is in fact quite devoted to the grave, sedate man with the tender heart. Will his benign influence one day still further cement the new friendship?



The Singer's Christmas

A HOLIDAY STORY

The air of the December day was soft and mild. All the world was in the streets, glad of a respite from the late cold "snap," which had brought out furs and heavy wraps.

Signora Cavada was taking her accustomed drive, chaperoned by a comfortable looking American woman; for this was an American city, and the famous prima donna was winning nightly laurels at the Louisville Opera House.



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To-day, the carriage with its high-stepping bays sought a new neighborhood, that the great singer might not be bored with repeated views of the same places. As it bowled along an old man in tattered garments approached, hat in hand, and held it toward the open window for alms. The driver cracked his whip peremptorily above the straggling gray locks of the suppliant, and drove on toward the suburbs.

“Who was that poor old man?” asked the singer in excellent English.

“Oh, only a beggar; the streets are full of them just before Christmas,” replied her companion.

“Is he very poor?” persisted the signora. “In my own country we have beggars—they make a business of begging. But that was a grand face. I shall go back again to look for him; tell the driver.”

Accustomed to obey the caprices of her mistress, the duenna gave the order and the carriage turned back. There stood the old man as before, but this time he did not approach the equipage.

“Come here,” said the signora, holding out a neatly gloved hand.

Fixing his faded eyes, now kindling with something like hope, upon her lovely face, he came nearer, and at her bidding told his story. It was a common one: Ill-health, a vagabond son, his earnings all gone, no work, and finally beggary.

“And have you no one to take care of you? Where do you live?”

“In that old shed, madam,” he answered, pointing to a tumbled down cabin once used as a cobbler’s shop. “And I have with me my little girl, my grandchild.”

“A little girl in that place? Where is she? How do you keep her?”

“Ah, madam, she makes flowers—her mother taught her—and earns a few pennies now and then. She sings, too, madam,” he added with pride.

“Sings?” eagerly echoed the signora. “Fetch her here; I want to see her.”

“She has gone away to the woods to gather evergreens. To-morrow is Christmas Day.”

“Yes, yes, I remember! And how do you celebrate the day?” added the lady.

“In feasting and rejoicing,” said the duenna, before the old man could answer.

“And the poor? I have read some very pretty stories about the poor in your cities on Christmas Day.”



“Oh, the poor get along well enough,” she said, with an accent of indifference or contempt. “They have more than they deserve.”

But the singer was again leaning toward the waiting figure outside, seeing which the old man said as if in apology:

“That is why I was asking for help, madam; people are generous at Christmas. But I have known better times; I do not like to beg.”

The prima donna was not rich. She supported her own old father and mother, and was educating her brother for a grand tenor. With one of those quick impulses born of heaven, she ordered the driver to descend from his box and throw open the carriage. When the roof parted and the sunshine came flooding down upon her, the singer faced the crowd that had been steadily gathering for ten minutes, eager to see the Signora Cavada, whose voice was the most jealously guarded jewel of her store. For she had been recognized by a chance passer-by.



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Suddenly there stole on the air a divine strain that caused a hush as by magic to fall upon the restless groups. Louder, sweeter, stronger, more entrancing it rose, then sunk to the whispering cadence of a sigh. The old man's hands were crossed before him, and tears poured down his withered cheeks. Ere the charmed listeners realized that the voice had ceased, the singer gave the poor supplicant a coin, and waving him toward the crowd, which was increasing every moment, said,—

“Tell them I will sing again.”

The old man went from one to another till the worn hat grew so heavy that he had to carry it in his arms. Money for his needs, money for his dear little girl. Then the signora sang again; when about to depart she scribbled an address which she handed the bewildered man, and drove on to her hotel.

What a Christmas was that! And what a feeling of happiness filled her heart! And the duenna said nothing.

A day or two later the beggar and his grandchild appeared at the private entrance of the hotel where the signora was sojourning. The paper he carried in his hand was a passport, and he soon stood in her parlor. He was dressed in a neat new suit, and the child was as sweet as a wild rose.

“Come and kiss me, little one,” said the beautiful lady. “I want to hear you sing.”

Unappalled by the richness of the apartment, and conscious only the kindness shown her, the child, who was about twelve years old, sang one of the popular street ballads of the day.

“Santa Maria!” exclaimed the signora, who always ejaculated in her own tongue. “But you have a treasure here, my friend! The child is a wonder. This voice must be trained—we will see—we will see.”

Touching an electric bell, she summoned a messenger and hastily wrote a line which she gave him. During the boy's absence she questioned the strange pair in whom she felt so absorbing an interest, and gathered what there was to tell of their daily life. Their neighbors were kind, and the women exercised a sort of motherly care over the little girl; but the very best there was to know seemed bad enough, and the singer shuddered as she imagined the dreariness of such poverty as their's.

In answer to the call a young man stood before her.

“Beppo,” she said, “your fortune is made; look at that old man.” She spoke in Italian, and the face of the artist, for such he was, lit up with enthusiasm, as he marked the striking head and face of the person indicated. “Your model for the Beggar of San Carlo,” continued the lady.



Beppo Cellini, at the bidding of his countrywoman, at once made terms with the old man to sit to him for his great Academy picture.

The little girl, whose voice now commands thousands of dollars on the operatic stage, was placed under training at the joint expense of her benefactress and two other artist friends.

The old man, Signor Beppo's model, is at rest now, but he still lives in the "Beggar of San Carlo." And the Signora Cavada, among all the good deeds of her charitable career, has never known a truer thrill of happiness than she experienced on her American Christmas Day.



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Turning the Tables

A PRACTICAL STORY

There was great commotion in the kitchen of a large seaside hotel not many miles from Long Branch. A commotion in fact, that struck dismay to the heart of the proprietor, who, upon visiting the store-room near by, was caught and detained, an invisible listener to the uproar.

"I 'clar ter gracious!" screamed the fat, colored cook, "I aint a-gwine ter stan' it no longer! Po' white trash a-layin' up in bed all mornin', an' den it's eggs! Eggs biled, eggs scrabbled, an' homilies (omelettes) tell yer can't res' nohow! I'se mazin' tired of it all, I tell yer! I'se gwine ter quit—I is!"

"You'se gwine ter quit—you is! I speck! I'm done heerd dat talk eber day dis month," jeered cook number two. "Ef you quits you kin jest bet yer bottom dollar I aint a-gwine to stay. Got more'n I kin do now—I is."

"An' what yer reckon dis chile's goin' ter do den?" pertly chimed in the mulatto kitchen maid. "I'm got all de runnin' roun' ter do, an' yer kin jist bet I don't have no easy time. Quit as quick as yer please—all of yer—I'll go 'long wid de crowd!" and with a toss of her woolly bangs, she dumped a pan of potato peelings out at the door.

"Dry up! dry up!" broke in the head waiter, appearing on the scene in true autocrat fashion. He boasted of "right smart book learnin'," and was a recognised power in the land. "You don't have no trouble at all to what I do. It's run here, there and everywhere, all in a minute, with a dozen blockheads to look after. And it's precious few tips I get here, I promise you! I never see as stingy a lot o' people in all my born days. Say! you there, Jim! fetch that tray along! What are you gapin' at, nigger?"

"Don't you nigger me, you black dude!" retorted the darkey, and as he spoke a smart chambermaid pranced along, flirting back at another waiter, and ran plump against the boy, tray and all. Down went the dishes with a clatter which brought a bevy of waiters and maids on the scene, while the laundress rushed in, all dripping with soapsuds. This so irritated the head waiter that he seized a teacup and threw it at the unlucky tray man. Then followed a fusillade of broken crockery and promiscuous dodging of giggling maids and explosive men-servants.

The fat cook interposed a threatening, hissing tea-kettle to stop the war, and the perplexed housekeeper appeared among the belligerents as the overwhelmed proprietor beat a hasty retreat. Stealing unperceived along the corridors, an idea struck him. This state of things was simply dreadful; something must be done. He quickly decided. He despatched his little son to the rooms and all about the premises to request the guests to assemble to an affair of state in the imposing chamber known as

the main parlor. His wife was an invalid, and the poor man was beside himself in his perplexity.

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With wondering, smiling faces they came—a pleasing array of city boarders—ease and comfort written upon every face.

His audience assembled, the distressed gentleman proceeded to pour forth his grievances. He asked what he should do in such a dilemma. His help had been engaged from the swarms of colored persons who infest the stations and public resorts along the coast. They had given trouble ever since the hotel was opened. They complained and annoyed him first about one thing, then about another, till he was well on to the verge of lunacy.

“Now, ladies and gentlemen,” he pathetically continued, “if I try to soothe and satisfy, and raise wages and make promises, what guarantee have I that the same thing will not occur to-morrow, and next day, and next week? I engaged them fairly and squarely, and have held strictly to my contract. They are so spoiled and unmanageable that there is no satisfaction in their service. Even now, while I am talking they are no doubt still in an uproar. Why, it is a wholesale mutiny. Something must be done at once. I have come to you for advice. If, as I say, they could be persuaded to remain, I cannot promise you any comfort. If I discharge the whole crew, it will be a day, perhaps two days, before I can supply their places; for I shall have to go to New York for white help. Can you solve the problem?”

For a moment there was silence. Then Miss May Delano, a handsome, wealthy city girl, said, with a challenging glance all around: “I’ll wait upon the table for my part, if somebody will get me something to serve!”

This was received with an outburst, and instantly all was chatter and confusion as they caught up the spirit of the thing.

“I’ll fill the orders as fast as you can take them,” boasted a Wall St. exquisite, who would have unbent his dignity to any degree to please the bewitching heiress.

“I’ll help anywhere—wherever I’m needed,” exclaimed another city belle.

“And I!” came in chorus. “We’ll be chambermaids,” said a party who had just donned bathing suits of blue flannel.

“All right! Get to work!” commanded the crowd. “You have on just the dress for the business.”

“Well, Mrs. Ingalls,” smilingly encouraged a plump matron, “I suppose we might do as good cooking here as we have done at home in times of emergency. Shall we try?”

“I’m agreeable,” laughed the lady. “That is, if we can manage the range.”



“Oh, leave that to me,” said her husband. “I guess I’ve handled ranges before.” Which caused more merriment, since that gentleman’s business was in the hardware line.

Fresh came another bevy of rosy faces, whose owners declared that they had been to a cooking school and knew all about it.

“Nothing like practical demonstration,” bantered the young men.

“Hurrah!” cried one Hamilton, the pet of the house. “Give me the girl who can don a white apron, roll up her sleeves, and plunge her pretty arms into the flour barrel! That’s what I’m looking for!” and he cleverly balanced a chair on his chin, amid a clamor of repartee and good-natured defiance.



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“Go in, the whole ship’s crew!” fervently urged a family man. “It will be the best fun of the season.”

“All right!” promptly agreed the ladies. “We are ready. Now, hurry up and get on your porter’s apron in time for the next wagon of trunks. Pray, call us when you are about to shoulder one!” which turned the laugh on the muscular member of the group.

“I think I’d rather be parlor maid,” sweetly chimed in a little blonde beauty, with fluffy bangs.

“Suits you to a T,” was the gallant response from the younger men.

“And I’ll have to stand guard to keep you from flirting,” put in an adorer.

“Pot calling the kettle black!” was the saucy fling from a chorus of school-girls who were enjoying their first seaside vacation.

“Now, grandma,” exclaimed the parlor maid to a beautiful old lady with silver hair, “you shall have a big chair right in the middle of the dining hall, and be manager-in-chief.”

Meanwhile the landlord had been overcome.

“Ladies,” he now managed to articulate, and certainly he meant it, “I don’t know what to say; I don’t know how to thank you. But I know what I’ll do; I’ll turn away the last one of those quarrelsome blacks; root and branch they shall go. I’m tired of living in bedlam. I shall go down at once and start them; then I’ll telegraph to New York and take the first train out. Rest assured I shall be back to your relief as soon as possible.”

The proprietor had made himself heard in the confusion, and as he left the parlor hearty cheers followed him, when immediately the groups of talkers broke out again into plans and promises.

“Organize! Organize!” thundered a big man who had been jostled from his morning paper. “There can be no success without system.”

“Hear! Hear!” roared the fun-loving fellows. “Down with the crowd to the lower regions! Come on with your constitution and by-laws! Hold fast to law and order! Give us liberty, or death—pumpkin pies and lily-white hands! Hurrah! On to the kitchen!”

With mock circumspection they were forcing couples to pair off; but the level-headed matrons soon arranged matters more to the purpose. The various branches of work were assigned to willing hands that only awaited the signal for action.

Great was the consternation of the mutineers when the “boss” appeared in the dismantled kitchen and ordered them all off the premises. In vain they protested, laying



the blame on first one and then another. Their day of grace was ended and no quarter shown. Wilfully and from sheer love of bickering, they had offended all sense of justice and propriety, and in unbroken ranks they must go.

When the fiat had irretrievably gone forth, they showed again the claws and the cloven foot. The “cook-lady” said she “didn’t hafter work nohow;” she reckoned she could “git along.” The maids and the waiters took the cue and were equally independent. But though paid their wages in full, they were discharged without “a recommend”; and this, in the height of the season, was no small privation.



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“Teach them a lesson!” muttered the proprietor with satisfaction. “Serves them right! I’m rather glad of the row.”

Cheerily the guests fell to work in their several departments, and if more than one match for life was not made among the young people, it was from no lack of genuine admiration in their new roles. The lads and lassies were happy and rosy and busy at their self-appointed tasks. The white-coated waiters were dubbed “No. 47,” “No. 50,” and so on, and right nobly they served the well-spread tables, which lacked nothing, not even the boon of contentment, which so helps digestion.

The flushed matrons behind big kitchen aprons, with diamonds locked away in the hotel safe, took turns to perfection. Many guests took their ease, and were mere lookers-on at the frolic; but a right goodly company put their shoulders to the wheel.

When the new corps of “help” were installed, they found the hotel clean and tidy from attic to cellar, and everything in its proper place.

The episode was one to be remembered by the malcontents, who had had a severe lesson; by the host, who had seen a genuinely good side of human nature; and the ladies who had so nobly stepped into the breach, learned during their brief period of servitude to be more patient and considerate to those who serve.

How She Helped Him

STORY OF A WIFE

“Well, tell me about Henry Woodruff. How did that match turn out?”

“Bad enough thus far. He is the same delightful, good-hearted fellow as of old; always ready to do a kind, or courteous act. But this woman will be the ruin of him.”

“How? What is the trouble?”

“The trouble is she is spoiled to death! She fancies herself an invalid, lies around, does nothing but read Charlotte Braeme and Bertha M. Clay—has every foolish whim gratified, and, in fact, I don’t see how he stands it.”

“Did she have any property?”

“Not a cent. It was an out-and-out love match. She has expensive tastes; she is indolent and extravagant. Why, his carriage hire is a big item of itself. She couldn’t walk a block, you know.”



“Perhaps she really is a sufferer.”

“Nonsense; nobody believes it. She had that fall, you recollect at the skating rink. At first her spine was thought to be seriously injured. Woodruff paid out several hundred dollars to have her cured, and the doctors discharged her, well, they said. But it has pleased her to drag around, a load on his hands, ever since. It is thought that he is much crippled financially. I know positively that he has lately mortgaged his interest in the firm. If he can't manage to make, or save five thousand dollars by the end of this year, it is all up with him. And he will never do it at his present rate of living,”

“Why doesn't he tell her? Has she no sense, or feeling at all?”



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“None, except for herself; and he is so fond of her that he will indulge her to his very last cent.”

“I thought he looked a little down as he passed us this morning.”

“Yes, he is beginning to realize that he has gone too far, and, poor fellow, it is tugging at him hard.”

Did she hear aright? Was it of her, Eleanor Woodruff, that they were talking? Swiftly she sped out of the dark, heavily-curtained back parlor of the stylish boarding-house, and into her room, a gorgeous alcove apartment on the first floor. She could not mount the stairs on account of her weak spine. Weak spine? She forgot all about it as she paced the floor, angry tears gushing from her large brown eyes. It was shameful—it was wicked—to be so abused. She had never in her whole petted life been found fault with. As to money, what did she know about it? Her father, before his failure and death, had always gratified her. Her husband had never made any difference. These men were friends of his.

Her bitter sobs ceased, and her wounded vanity gradually lost itself in better thoughts. Did all her world think of her like the scathing criticisms of those two chance callers, who thus killed the time of waiting for someone to come down to them? She began to feel glad that she had overheard it. The merest accident had sent her into the back parlor. Was it true? What ought she to do? What could she do? Her dear, kind husband in trouble, and she the cause. Long she sat buried in thought, and when the well-known step sounded at the door her face was radiant with a new resolve.

He came to her large easy-chair with a step somewhat weary, but his kiss was as usual.

“All right, Nellie? Had a good day? Why, you look—let me see—how do you look?” he said, his kind eyes noting the brightness that shone in hers.

“I look as if I love my big boy very much, don’t I?” she responded merrily.

His answer was another kiss, and as he turned toward his dressing closet, her heart ached with unspoken tenderness. Her dinner was brought in. She was not considered strong enough to sit at table. For this service an extra charge was made.

Later, when he opened the evening paper, she sat and watched him. Surely those lines of care were new, now that he was not smiling fondly upon her. Oh, foolish, selfish wife! Rising gently, her long silken tea-gown trailing behind her, she stood beside him, one slender white hand upon his shoulder.

“Well, dear, what now? Another new gown?” he asked, with his old, sweet smile.



She pressed her lips in a slow, reverential fashion, upon the broad white brow, another pang at her heart. Then she spoke:

“Not this time. Harry, dear, let’s go to Mrs. Wickham’s to board.”

“Mrs. Wickham’s!” he echoed. “Why, you wouldn’t stay in her dull little place a week.”

But even as he spoke there flashed through his mind in rapid calculation, “Twenty dollars a week there, forty here; eighty dollars a month saved; nearly a thousand dollars a year.”

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“Don’t you like it here?” were his next words, as he glanced around the luxurious suite.

“Yes,” she said, “except there are too many people. It is so noisy.”

“Very well, then, we will try it; anything to please my darling,” and he drew her close, wrapped in his arms as one might lull a restless child.

The move was made, and Eleanor found that she was not as much fatigued as she had often felt after a day’s lounging with a novel. Her husband thought it only a new whim; but as it was not expensive one, he could not remonstrate. When he wanted to take her driving, she playfully told him she was learning to walk—horses made her nervous.

The first step, she thought; now for the next. It came to her almost by magic. In a little rear hall-room sat Margaret Dewees, clicking away at her typewriter. A strong, clear-headed girl who had maintained herself these ten years, and had put by her savings. She was soon to be married to a stalwart young farmer, the lover of her early youth. They had been working and waiting. From the first she took an interest in the young wife, and it was given to her energy and common sense to help a suffering sister. Together they plotted and planned. Eleanor’s lassitude gradually passed away under vigorous rubbing and brisk walks.

Margaret’s trousseau was a thing to be considered. From Mrs. Woodruff’s surplus stock of stylish gowns and garments the country girl’s outfit was deftly concocted. The young wife could sew neatly and rapidly. When all was ready the sum of two hundred dollars lay in her writing desk. Her grand piano, too large for the new quarters, was removed from storage to a dealer’s, and was sold for three hundred more. She wrote at once to an uncle in a Western city; told him of her little efforts, and asked what she might do with her mite. He was a real estate man and promptly invested it in a lot in the rising town of Duluth.

In exchange for her services as seamstress, Margaret taught Eleanor the use of the typewriter. When she was married she left the instrument, for the summer months, in Eleanor’s care. A nominal rent was agreed upon, and this was easy to pay, as Margaret’s engagements were transferred to the new operator, while she, herself, attended to chickens and cows, and her six feet of husband.

Eleanor’s spirit of enterprise did not stop here. She obtained pupils on the type-writer machine at five dollars each. She shipped a lot of old party dresses, crushed and out of style, to the costumer’s on B—— street, and saved the proceeds. Every time her husband handed over her allowance of pin money, she put at least half of it in her “strong box.”

It was hard to hide all this activity and cheerfulness from him, but she did. With her woman’s enjoyment of a little mystery, and her high resolve to show herself worthy of

him, she kept in the old rut as nearly as possible when he was at home. He saw only that she was stronger, and it lightened his labors.



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“My little woman does not ride, or read, any more,” he said one evening, in the indulgent tone he used towards her.

“Why, yes, I do read. Don’t you see my little library there?”

“Yes, but it seems to me I miss something.”

He missed the litter of trashy novels he had been wont to see.

“I told you I was learning to walk;” she added, with a smile, “I really do walk somewhere every day.”

“That pleases me most of all,” he said in his cheery way, “but what will Dr. Bull think. You know he prescribes rest and quiet.”

“I don’t care one bit; I have long since cut his acquaintance.”

* * * * *

The end of the year rolled round. Eleanor watched her husband’s face with ever increasing anxiety. One evening he sat buried in thought from which all her endeavors could not rouse him. He did not feel well, he said. All night he tossed and muttered. Calculations and figures were uppermost.

He was up early, as usual, and away. Eleanor hastened her preparations, and carefully counted her little hoard—the earnings of months. Early in the afternoon she came home with the proceeds of her last batch of type-writing, glowing with exercise, and the happiness of contributing at least some hundreds to meet her husband’s creditors. He was there, lying on the sofa, pale and hopeless. Forgetting all else, she flung herself beside him with a sob.

“Oh! Harry, my dearest! Tell me what it is that is killing you—I have a right to know.”

“It is ruin, Eleanor. I have brought you to poverty—you whom I would have given my very life to make happy.”

“You are talking in riddles, Harry,” she exclaimed, rallying from her alarm. “Am I not the happiest woman in the world? And don’t you see how well and strong I am?”

She coaxed the whole story from his lips. Then with affected lightness, she said: “Is that all? Why, you frightened me terribly; I thought you were ill—had caught some horrible disease or other. See here!”

As she spoke she ran to her desk, took out her treasure, and poured it into his hands in her impulsive fashion.



“Eleanor! What is this?” staring like one dazed, from her radiant face to the notes in his hands.

“This? Why, this is only your silly wife’s laziness and selfishness in another form.”

Then her story had to be told. Their combined efforts still fell short of the required sum, but she triumphantly produced the deed to the Western land. For a season there were caresses and even tears, of mutual love and thankfulness.

“My precious wife!” he exclaimed, as he clasped her close. “What a treasure in you, if all the money in the world should fail!”

“But your piano!” he said, with regret overreaching his appreciation of her sacrifice.

“Let it go,” she merrily replied. “I could not play worth listening to—this you must admit. It was just an expensive, cumbersome toy—that’s all.”



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Next day the balance of the debt was borrowed upon the security of the western deed, and Henry Woodruff was a free man once more. When the five hundred dollars jumped to thousands in a sudden boom, he bought a neat home. Here, Margaret, the valued friend, supplied produce from her farm.

Eleanor was never quite content till Harry had looked up her two maligners, and brought them to the pleasant domain where she presided, and which her painfully awakened energy had helped to buy. In time she told her secret, and thanked them for that ten minutes' gossip. In time, too, sons and daughters came and found a mother prepared by self-denial for the exigencies of life.

The Iron Box

A MYSTERY

Twilight dropped its soft, somber curtain upon a handsome southern home. Sadly out of keeping with the peaceful landscape and cheerful hearthstone, were the feelings of a man who crept close to the window shutter, and peered cautiously within the cosy apartment. And brighter grew the twinkle in his rapacious eyes as the brilliant objects upon which he glared shone in the lamplight.

Upon a table in the center of the room was a mosaic casket, the raised lid disclosing a collection of jewels rarely to be found in the possession of a single individual.

With glowing cheeks and radiant eyes Netta Lee surveyed her treasures; but the glow and sparkle were for the tall figure beside her, however her feminine pride might be gratified at this splendid array. So long as Richard Temple honored her among women with his heart's devotion, there needed not the glitter of gems to complete her happiness.

"Our friends are most kind with their wedding gifts," said the prospective bridegroom, "these are royal!—"

"Yes, and oh, Richard! just see these pearls. Exquisite, aren't they! One hundred years old, and a present from my grandmother."

"What a queer, old-fashioned case," said Mary, a younger sister taking up the flat, square box of red morocco, where nestled in its white satin lining lay the milky brooch and ear-rings.

"So much the more valuable; in this love-of-the-antique age," remarked Bertha Lee.

"Netta, who sent these gorgeous corals?"

"Aunt Winifred;—wasn't it good of her?"



“Pooh! No more than she might do for each of us,” replied the saucy girl. “Heigho! I wish my fate, if I have one, might appear. Couldn’t you innocently suggest to the old lady that I have no jewels for the all-important occasion—a bridesmaid, too?”

“Why not select from these?” said Richard. “There is enough here, and to spare, for all. Let’s see—pearl, diamond, amethyst, coral, emerald, turquoise, filagree—I declare it is a veritable jeweler’s display.”

“You must recollect, though, Richard, I had some of these before.”

“Her friends seem to have discovered her weakness,” observed Mrs. Lee, entering the room.



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“Now, mother, you shall not say that. You forget the carloads of things that have come—nice, useful, domestic articles——”

“Richard, what is it? What is the matter?” suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Lee, looking at him.

In alarm Netta glanced at his face, which she saw was clouded from anxiety, or pain. At once she closed the casket and went to his side in great concern.

“What is it, dear? Are you ill?”

“Not ill in body, my love; hardly comfortable in mind,” was his reply, as he sat down upon the davenport close by. “Sit here beside me, and I will tell you what is troubling me. No, don’t go,” he added, as the others started to leave the room, “it concerns us all.”

“Don’t look so alarmed,” he said, reassuringly, to his betrothed. “It is only this. News reached Columbus to-day that Baywater’s gang is near Villula, and as usual their progress is marked by bloodshed and outrage. The feature that concerns me most is that if I am detailed for duty, it will of necessity postpone our marriage.”

Various expressions broke from the ladies, and Netta exclaimed in terror:

“But you will be in danger, Richard. Can no one else go?” and she clung to him as though her frail clasp could keep him in safety at her side.

“I fear not. The state militia must do its duty. You would not have me skulk in the hour of danger. But there really is no danger for me, Netta. The sole trouble is in the change of our plans.”

But they remembered too distinctly Baywater’s last visit to derive the comfort conveyed in his words.

“And where must you go? What must you do?” tearfully asked Netta.

“I can scarcely tell. We shall be required to watch the premises of the citizens, and to convey all valuables to places of safety. The policy is not to provoke a battle, but to entrap them nearer and nearer the city by holding out baits till they can be apprehended in a body. To do this, we shall be divided into small squads, perhaps only two persons allotted to a station.”

It was apparent to the elder lady that the plans had already been arranged, and Temple’s duties mapped out.

The man at the window strained his ears to catch the topic which evidently excited profound interest. A word or two reached him, and he saw Temple point to the box of jewels. Then, as the door opened, he heard him say:



“Remember—the first thing to-morrow—Dry Thicket.”

Ere the departing visitor could come upon him, the straggler bounded over the fence and hurried away. But he had learned enough.

A sound, real or fancied, caused Richard Temple to glance down the starlit highway, in time to see the fleeing human figure. In newborn apprehension he returned to the parlor door, and was admitted in some wonder by the ladies, who were still discussing the situation.

“Is Lawrence at home?” he asked.

“Yes—why?”



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"I think I'll turn in with him to-night, if he will give me half a bed. I fear you are not safe with those jewels in the house."

"Certainly," responded Mrs. Lee with ready hospitality. "You may have a whole bed and room, too, if you like."

"Thanks, madam, I prefer to concentrate forces. Give me the box, and you ladies go to rest. We'll protect you;" he valiantly added, as the young son of the house now appeared.

Richard Temple was not mistaken. A little after midnight the watchers heard a noise as of sawing, or filing. Peering from an upper window they located the sound at the parlor shutter, and soon discerned the figure of a man in a crouching attitude. Swiftly and noiselessly the young men stole down and out by a back door, and were creeping upon the burglar to capture him, when a short, quick bark from the house dog startled the man, who fled precipitately. The pursuers fired, but it was too dark to see beyond a few yards.

The ladies, aroused and alarmed, were soon reassured, but persisted in sharing the remainder of the vigil.

Early next morning, leaving the servants to infer that they were bound upon a berry excursion, the little party set out, Richard bearing the mosaic box, the girls carrying other valuables, and Lawrence armed with a larger wooden box and a pick. Their destination was Dry Thicket, so called from the exceeding dryness of the earth beneath the almost impenetrable trees of native growth. These trees were so closely interlaced by a tough vine peculiar to the soil, that it was necessary to cut one's way, or force it by dint of strength.

In order to accomplish this feat the ladies had donned homespun dresses kept for such excursions, and the gentlemen were suitably provided. Winding through an arable field they descended the narrow path that led into the thicket, and were soon pushing and cutting their way against the stout lattice of vines. When far into the interior they found themselves in a natural arbor free from undergrowth and utterly secluded. A fallen log afforded a seat for the ladies, and the custodians of the box at once proceeded to bury their treasures of gold and plate, silver and jewels. An hour sufficed for the task. When scattering, dry leaves over the fresh earth the party returned to Lee Villa somewhat the worse for wear.

"Until these dangerous invaders shall have left the community, or are arrested, I think we should arm the negro men on the plantation and be prepared for possible surprises," were Richard Temple's parting words, as he took leave for Columbus, twenty miles distant.



Villula was altogether inland, and hence an easy prey to outlaws. The nearest railway station was at Silver Run, two miles away. The first down train brought a hasty letter from Temple, stating that he and Lawrence Lee were detailed to convey four fine horses belonging to Major Lester, to a place of safety, and that the threatened section had been well picketed.

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There was at once a general hiding out of valuables, live stock and provisions, the numerous swamps and thickets affording secure harbors all over the section. A reign of terror existed during the next two weeks. The dreaded marauders were at work, and stories were rife of insult to women, and outrages upon men whom they hung by the neck till almost dead unless they revealed the whereabouts of their treasures. Thus far they had baffled the vigilance of the authorities. The country was thinly settled, and the peculiar features of the landscape afforded facilities both for concealment and escape.

One evening the ladies of Lee Villa sat watching the resplendent sunset from the front piazza, when a ragged, barefoot urchin came up the road turning somersaults with surprising agility. He righted himself up at the gate, then entered and sidled rather doubtfully toward the group.

“Here’s somethin’ fur Miss Lee. Be you her?”

“Yes,” said Netta, receiving a dirty note from the boy’s dusty fingers. “Where did you get this?”

“He gave it to me—he did,” nodding his head down the road, “an’ he gimme this, too!” he added triumphantly, holding up a shining coin, as he darted away again at his evolutions.

Netta deciphered the following lines from Richard:

“We are encamped in Dry Thicket with the horses, all safe thus far.
Do not attempt to come; you could not find us. Keep a brave heart.
We will soon entrap the rascals. (Messenger best I can find).

“Faithfully,

“R.T.”

About nine o’clock one morning a party of ten men, headed by the notorious Baywater, rode up the single street of Villula, sending terror to the hearts of unprotected women. Not apprehending an attack in daytime, the two young men were on duty elsewhere, and the negroes were in the cotton fields.

Passing through the town amid a great dust and clatter, they drew rein at the villa. The ladies came to the door in response to the captain’s imperious halloo.

“We’ve come to find out where the Lester horses are, madam—and what’s more,” he added with a brutal oath, “we intend to know!”

“I have no information to give you,” calmly returned Mrs. Lee.



“Perhaps you won’t tell us where that box of diamonds is, either,” he sneered.

To this there was no reply. The three girls were pallid from apprehension of the next move. Apparently a proposition was made. The leader shook his head. After a brief parley he dismounted, and with five of his men, strode across the lawn to the negro quarters. An old negress sat at the door, smoking her pipe, and knitting a coarse yarn sock. A bright mulatto boy was crossing the back yard with a water bucket.

In vain the outlaws sought to extract from the old woman the whereabouts of her master with the horses and jewels. She was in reality as ignorant as they.



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“Come now, Auntie,” said the captain in wheedling tones, “tell us and we will make you free. You won’t have to work any more.”

“Oh, go ‘long!” was her contemptuous rejoinder, “I’se free as I want to be.”

“Why, you old fool!” he roughly retorted, “you don’t know what freedom means. You shall wear a silk dress and ride in a carriage and have a gold chain.”

“I speaks gold chain!” echoed the woman tossing her grey head, “you po’ white trash can’t come it ober dis chile wid yer crick-cracks. Jes you go ‘long. I’se got my bacon and greens, an’ a good cotton coat. Yer can’t fool dis chile wid yer fine talk!”

“Curse the old hag! Let’s try the boy. You! Sirrah! Come here.”

With ashen cheeks the boy followed them into an outhouse, while the Captain flourished a stout whip.

“Oh! mother,” cried Netta, “don’t let them whip him! He never was whipped in his life!”

Mrs. Lee advanced a few paces from the back gallery whence they had been watching the proceedings and called, “Charlie!”

The boy sprang towards his mistress, his captors not venturing to be too rash at the outset.

“I want this boy for a moment,” explained the lady. In sullen silence they waited.

“Going to buy him up to secrecy,” derided the Captain, “but I guess we’ll work it out of him when he comes back. We’ve got him, sure, and can afford to wait.”

But Charlie did not come back. Thrusting a bill into his hand his mistress said: “Fly for your life, to Columbus and tell Col. Scale that we must have protection. There is no train. Take the old country road and lose no time!”

Nor did the terrified boy let the grass grow under his steps. Ere the next sun rose he was in Columbus, footsore, but safe.

Again baffled, the desperadoes took horse, and held a consultation.

“If I thought they knew,” muttered the Captain, “by —— they would be made to tell. There’s no other way—we must search that d—— thicket. You know what Jem heard at the window the other night.”

With this they galloped down the road, taking a more circuitous route to Dry Thicket than the little path hidden from view behind Lee Villa. In an agony of foreboding Netta



exclaimed: "Oh, mother, we must save them. Let's get ready and go at once. I know every part of Dry Thicket!"

Hurriedly donning the homespun dresses, the mother and daughters set out, leaving a maid in the house, and the old cabin "Granny" still smoking serenely over her knitting. They were soon on the spot where the jewels had been buried. The shock of the moment may be better conceived than described, when they saw an open pit, a pile of freshly-turned earth, and no trace of their carefully-concealed treasures! The blood receded from every face. Gone—all gone! The exquisite bridal presents—the diamonds from her betrothed, the ancient pearls, Aunt Winifred's family jewels, the heirlooms of plate—all vanished as utterly as if they had never been.



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In sheer feebleness the stunned party sank down upon the prostrate log. They now observed the charred remains of a camp fire, and shreds of grey blanket adhering to the tenacious Tie-Vine.

“What *shall* we do?” broke from Netta in despair. The loss of her superb ornaments for the time took the place of every other sentiment. Even the safety of her loved ones was forgotten.

“Well,” said Mary, recovering herself, “it is no use grieving. We had better be looking for Lawrence and Richard. You know those villains hung Colonel Harris by the neck till he was nearly dead, because he would not tell where his money was.”

“Hush, Mary,” said her mother, “don’t suggest such horrible things.”

But their search was unavailing. That night was one of agonizing suspense. Next day the noon train brought Charlie with a note from Colonel Scale, saying that Lawrence would return home as soon as orders could reach him.

The story of the missing jewels was freely discussed, and friends came in numbers to condole with the bride-elect, and rehearse similar depredations that had come to their ears.

At last flashed the news that the State Militia had surrounded the daring invaders, by a well-executed maneuver, and had disarmed them. The leader fought desperately and was mortally wounded. The prisoners were forced to reveal the place where their ill-gotten gains were stored, and the owners were publicly summoned to identify their property. But the Lee jewels were not found, and the gang obstinately disclaimed all knowledge of them.

Suspense in regard to them was, however, soon to be relieved. Two more days of waiting, and the close of a lovely afternoon was made memorable by the return of the wanderers to Lee Villa. A torrent of questions and incidents so assailed them that they could not intelligibly answer the one, or comment on the other.

“And, oh! Richard,” faltered Netta, “they have stolen our box—all my beautiful presents!”

“And the spoons,” chimed in Mary, loyal to the family heirlooms.

“You’d better say the money,” said Bertha with conviction. “I would rather have lost anything else than all that gold and silver.”

“Only give us a chance,” said her brother appealingly, “and we will relieve your anxiety on this point.”



“You have it! You have it!” cried the girls excitedly crowding upon him.

“No,” said Richard laughing heartily, while the brother endeavored to extricate himself. “He hasn’t it but if I can have a hearing I will tell you of its fate. We hoped you would not miss it. Nor would you,” he added, looking archly at Netta, “if you had obeyed my injunction not to try to find us.”



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All anxiety, his auditors were profoundly attentive while Richard narrated the adventures that had befallen them in the thicket. They were hotly pursued and closely surrounded several times, so determined were the raiders upon capturing the horses, but friendly arbors screened them from view, and the sagacious animals were as quiet as their preservers. On the night of their arrival at the thicket with the horses, Richard suggested that it might be wise to remove the box, since in case the ladies were surprised they might be forced to disclose the secret. Accordingly he and his companion dismounted, secured the horses, and penetrated on foot to the place. What was their amazement to see the smouldering light of a fire and a man stretched upon the ground in a deep sleep. A grey blanket served him for a pillow. Ere they could reach him he stirred uneasily, started up, seized his blanket, and sprang away among the trees. But they were too quick for him, especially as the clinging vine impeded his progress. They captured him, and he confessed that he was one of Baywater's scouts, and that he had spent two days in the thicket searching for the box of jewels he had seen through the window of the villa.

The young men secured their prisoner, whom one guarded at the pistol's point, while the other pushed on, buried the box in another place, and then they conveyed the ruffian to Columbus.

"Three nights ago," concluded Richard, "we were so closely cornered that there was no help but in flight. We rode continuously till our horses were safe on the Lester plantation, but my Bonnie Bess is done for, I fear," and he glanced compassionately at the reeking animal, his own especial property.

Poor Bess! Ere another twenty-four hours had gone by, her sorrowful master was called away from the villa to see her die of lockjaw. He had ridden her to her death in the performance of his duty.

After his interesting recital the ladies refused to wait till morning to regain the buried treasures. They would go at once, and a number of friends who had gathered to welcome the returned wanderers, and congratulate their prowess, volunteered to accompany the party. So they started, quite a procession, relying upon the lately frequented path to save their garments from rents.

The new spot chosen for the little pit was only a few yards from the original place, and seemed sunken for several feet in all directions—a significant fact as it proved.

This time Charlie wielded the pick, and with such exaggerated force that the earth was loosened for quite a space around the box. Some excitement attended the rescue of the precious casket from fancied peril, and the dense bower resounded with an animated discussion of late events.



Warned by the lengthening shadows they turned to depart when a bystander suddenly peering forward, said: "Look there, Lee. What is that? There, close to the tree. Temple, do you see?"



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“The root of a tree, I think,” replied Lawrence, stooping down to examine a dark object that jutted out of the newly opened pit.

Clearing the earth away with his hands he discovered, not a root, but what seemed to be the corner of an iron box. Richard, who was beside him, fell to work, and a further exploration revealed a band of some metal, probably brass. Intense curiosity now prevailed.

“Charlie, go to the house and bring some torches,” said his master. Then to Richard: “We must get at the bottom of this. The ladies had better go—it is nearly night.”

But the ladies would do nothing of the kind. Here was something that promised to be a mystery indeed. They remained till an iron, brass-bound box, not large but heavy, had been disinterred and with difficulty lifted to the surface. With still more difficulty it was conveyed to the villa, where the expectant group waited for a smith to come and open it.

When the rusty lock was made to unclasp, the top was raised, and there, in numerous rouleaux, was gold coin to the amount of thousands of dollars. Excitement was now but a faint term for the sensation.

The young men were congratulated upon their find till their hands were sore from pressure, and the ladies were embraced in proportion by enthusiastic friends.

How came it there? Who had buried it and when? There was a legend in those parts that four wealthy Spaniards had been pursued and butchered by the Indians in the early days, and that they had, while fleeing away, buried the gold in an Alabama wild. Another tradition was, that during the siege of New Orleans, some French settlers had run the blockade and penetrated far into the country with vast wealth that was never traced afterwards. Some of the older citizens had also heard of a miserly ancestor of the Lawrences (Mrs. Lee had been a Lawrence) who lived a hermit life in the villa when it was only a log cabin; who denied himself the simplest comforts, and who died in want; but he had been seen by the curious counting his gold at night.

Whatever the mystery it was never solved. The facts as known were widely published, but no rival claimant ever appeared.

The wedding was a brilliant social affair. The Lee family were recognized leaders, and their ancestral home was noted for its elegant appointments and generous hospitality.

“And where will you and Dick live, Netta?” asked a Columbus belle.

“We think of building in the thicket.”

“What! Bury yourself in Dry Thicket? That horrible place?”



“Soyez tranquille, ma chere,” playfully answered the young bride. “Dry Thicket has proved too great a blessing to us to be dreaded. However, come and see us one day and judge for yourself.”



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And when, as the “one days” had lengthened into many, enticed by the rumors she heard, the girl, now a married woman, did go, she found a magnificent residence, with lovely terraced lawns, shell-road drives, and luxuries unknown in city homes. All on the site of the despised Dry Thicket. White cottages dotted the landscape, and there was no trace of the gloomy thicket save one natural bower overhung with trees and interlaced by vines. Within its cool recesses was a rustic chair, and sheltered by a miniature Gothic temple, stood the brightly-burnished iron box which chance had made the foundation of so much happiness and prosperity.

The Girl Farmers

A PRACTICAL STORY

“I see no way out of this, girls, but for you to go to work and support yourselves with your accomplishments. At least I suppose you’ve got some. Your schooling cost a fortune, and maybe it was well enough, for now there’s a chance for you to make it count.”

And thus delivering himself, gruff Uncle Abner took a fresh chew of tobacco, and let his eyes wander aimlessly among those dead-and-gone relatives hanging on the walls. Anywhere indeed but at the two rosy, eager faces before him; for the sisters, Margaret and Elizabeth, sat watching and listening to this, the first hint of difficulty in the easy-going of their pampered lives.

Margaret spoke. “What is the amount of the mortgage, Uncle?”

“Tut, tut,” he grunted, with a show of impatience, “you can’t understand; girls aint expected to know about business; they h’aint any heads for it. You’d better just shut up the place and come over to my house till you can look around you a bit.”

“You are very kind, uncle, but we will consider that after you have answered my question,” continued Margaret with quiet insistence. “How are we to understand unless we are told? And why keep us in ignorance? We have a right to know just how our father’s affairs were left, and I, for my part, *intend* to know;—” and the earnest young voice stopped short of the sob that caught and held it quivering.

There was silence while the tall clock ticked a few moments away. The large grey eyes had no release in their steady depths. Thus driven Uncle Abner proceeded to explain that it was when their brother James got into that trouble over his wife’s property. Their father had been obliged to borrow, and he (Uncle Abner), accommodated him, taking as security a mortgage on the farm.

“It was for five thousand dollars,” he concluded, “and of course if he had lived—,” he paused, and walking to the window, his hands plunged deep into his homespun



pockets, gazed uncomfortably upon the broad stretch of field and pasture so dear to the orphan nieces he was unwittingly torturing.

The Milfords were a proud race. Proud in the sturdy yeoman spirit of honest independence. Margaret was not long in making up her mind.



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“You are right, uncle,” she said with marked deliberation. “Libbie and I have indeed had every advantage that the best schools afford. We ought to go to work and we will. But —” and her wistful gaze swept their beloved possessions indoor and out—“it shall be here; not anywhere else.”

“What upon earth are you driving at?” spluttered Uncle Abner, while Elizabeth smiled acquiescence in the decision of the beloved older sister whose word had been law since their pinafore days. Whatever the outlook she would stand by her. “I’d like to know what you can do here!” went on their sage adviser, muttering audibly something about the “infernal nonsense of women folks.”

“I mean it, uncle. I never was further from talking nonsense. We will work here, on the old farm, and save our home from strangers, if you will only be patient and give us time. I can take charge of the hands and the crops. Elizabeth will manage the house and garden. In fact I find myself longing every minute to begin. It will be something to occupy us and divert us from gloomy thoughts;” and she glanced at the somber garments that told of recent bereavement.

“But you can’t stay here without a protector,” objected her uncle, getting downright wrathful as he felt inwardly conscious that he would be obliged to yield. He had seen his niece Margaret have her own way more than once. Still he must fight for it.

“You just take my advice and do what I said at first. Let somebody take the place and work off the debt—in a way, you understand. You can look about for a music class, and Lizzie here can get a position in the public schools. Of course you know you are welcome at my house as long as you need—”

“Now, listen, uncle, do,” broke in Margaret, catching his arm with clasped hands, as a persuasive cadence crept into her resolute tones. “I know I can learn to do what other women are doing all over the land. Not so many Southern women, I grant you; we are a spoiled lot as ever lived, and are foolishly ashamed to work. But we are no better than our sisters of the north and west, and I, for one, do not care a whit what people may think about it. As to being afraid to stay here, that would be silly. Why, I am not so very many years from thirty and Elizabeth is every bit of twenty-three. Quite old maids, you see;—bachelor maids, if you please. The neighborhood is thickly settled; Rock and Don are the best watch dogs ever seen, and the men in the cabins with their families are faithful, you know. The village is in sight, and the big farm bell can be heard a mile away. Nobody will molest us. I assure you we shall not be afraid; and last of all, I can handle a pistol as well as a man, if need be; and Libby is a terror with a hat pin! Now do be good and let us try it.”

The brave girl had her way, no matter if Davis did want to add the four hundred acres of the Milford farm to his own fine estate.

The first year was not a bed of roses for the inexperienced young farmers, but they were not daunted. A music class and a dozen pupils in belles-lettres helped out the income, and there was no inconsiderable revenue from the sale of milk, butter, eggs, fruit and vegetables.



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They had “the orchard, the meadow, and deep-tangled wildwood,” full of sacred memories. They fairly gloried in their dairy, the poultry yard, and garden. They were up at daylight, and with the help of a small boy from the cabins, gathered the marketing which Margaret, in her high cart, took to the hotels at the thriving village of the railroad junction.

Richard Davis undertook the live-stock raising for the sisters on the shares. This was a great help, though Uncle Abner, who had been bulldozed into complacency, he said, hinted on occasions that the “young fellow would be sharing himself with one of ’em before long.” However, the energetic maidens gave no heed, save to the grand purpose of their lives.

They learned to “gar old clo’es amaist as weel as new.” Carpets were darned and scoured and turned; the time-honored furniture was patched and polished; and their fair hands did not shrink from putting on a fresh coat of paint, or paper, now and then. Under severe pressure of temptation they parted with several pieces of old mahogany during the craze for antiques, at prices almost fabulous. This they invested in some shares of bank stock.

The second year’s profits footed up enough to make a payment to Uncle Abner, and then their joy knew no bounds. In vain their anxious friends urged them to sell out and live in a small cottage. Their sympathy was thrown away.

“Every blade of grass is dear to me,” persisted Margaret. “Perhaps I have more sentiment than sense, but this should be my life work. And when free from debt, think how easy to see the end of every year from the beginning. Meanwhile everything is getting more simple for us. At first, we had to be content with just the old rut, for we knew nothing else. Now we study the best methods. We take a farmer’s journal, which has proved a noble education. The continual improvements in machinery and necessary implements are of inestimable value. The best costs a little more at first, but in the end it pays.”

“I always detested farming,” exclaimed an old schoolmate who had married a rich banker.

“Come and see us,” said Margaret, with her hopeful smile. “Let us show you our work.”

She came, partly from curiosity, and together the friends went over the premises. First, the kitchen garden where grew in hills or rows vegetables after the most approved latter-day culture; next, the glowing garden of flowers whose gorgeous bloom found ready sale; then the poultry yard, pig-sties, bee-hives and stables, Margaret all the while discoursing upon remedies for this or that drawback, and how to manage the diverse brands and breeds, till her dainty friend held up her hands in honest wonder.

“How on earth and where did you learn all this?” she found voice to ask.

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“From the journals, I read about farming and gardening, about housekeeping, and raising all those barn-yard creatures. We are thinking of adding a small family of canaries to our stock; they are much sought after and readily sell. Oh, I could not get on at all without my papers. They are everything to me. Why, just listen to what I know about corn,” she went on, with a proud light in her handsome eyes. “Kentucky was once a leading state in raising corn, and she will be again,” and here followed facts and statistics singularly incongruous from rosy lips to the listening ears of the city girl. “There is nothing, Amelia, that pays like doing a thing well. For instance, our own Kentucky is not famous for well-kept farms, but I could not afford to have my fences down, my fields choked with weeds, and my stock depredating elsewhere.”

“But how do you manage your servants? They are the great bugbear nowadays.”

“By making them respect me and by paying good wages. They should not be expected to give their time and strength at starvation prices. I do have trouble sometimes. In fact I think, first and last, I have done everything but plow. But in the main I get along. The farm is prospering, and a few years hence I mean to have it called a model, not a mortgaged farm.”

“It is all right, of course, my dear, if you like it,” said her city friend, with somewhat unwilling admiration, “but I should think you would get dreadfully tanned and coarse.”

“Do I look so?” asked the country girl, with a happy little challenging laugh. “I was certainly never in better health.”

And the visitor had to admit that there was no lack of womanly beauty in the rich coloring of the young farmer’s rounded cheeks, albeit a few tiny freckles bridged the straight nose.

“But think how utterly you are lost to society! What a sacrifice for a Milford!” lamented the rich man’s wife, to whom life’s hard lessons had not come. “I can never forget the gorgeous entertainment at this old house when we were first home from school. Such flowers! Such music! Such a supper! And, oh, the lovely gowns! I declare, Maggie, you were a beauty that night, and Libbie never looked prettier. It seems a crying shame!”

“Not converted yet?” playfully asked the other, though the quick tears sprang to her eyes at the sudden stab of memory.

“Remember, dear,” she added gently, “we could not have gone out even if we had not decided to give up all idle pleasures. But we are not hermits, I assure you. Our old friends are most kind. Perhaps one day we may live again those happy times.”

“But surely you will marry. A girl like you could never be an old maid.”



At which sally Margaret laughed outright, adding gaily that there would be time enough and to spare for matrimony.

“I am too busy now to even think of it. By and by I shall have the finest of bees and fancy poultry. Already my grape arbor is thriving. I sell quantities of fruit and berries. But my stronghold is farm literature; I devour it at night, while Libbie reads society bits in the village weekly, or cons the city daily. Poor Lib! It goes right hard with her to draggle her skirts in the dewy strawberry beds; but she feels consoled when I fetch up the till! What misers we be, hoarding our strong box!”



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So these heroic girls are going on, the respected of all observers. Their example has encouraged others to throw off the shackles of "Southern caste" and be independent of unwilling relatives more favored by fortune. The mortgage is not yet entirely lifted, but it will be. The bluegrass pastures of the fine old estate have been given over to the grazing of blooded horses and cattle, at so much per head, thereby counting in a greatly increased revenue.

Margaret's latest venture is a fine young thoroughbred, which the knowing ones predict will prove a gold mine. So mote it be.

Uncle Abner is patient and helpful. He has long ago felt like hiding "his diminished head," and is proud of his young nieces. They have saved the old homestead where three generations of the family were born. Alone they have struggled, protected by the God of the orphan, whose glorious sunshine and rain so abundantly bless their labors!

Proving a Heart

A LOVE STORY

"Hold fast! don't be frightened! I can save you if you will only be strong!" were the exclamations that burst hurriedly from young Dr. Gardner's lips as, with horror-struck face he sprang from his window-seat and bounded downstairs.

And well might he hasten, for she who awaited his succor, hung perilously between heaven and earth, expecting every moment to be dashed to the ground.

For some minutes previous to his excited words, Weldon Gardner's gaze had been riveted in awful fascination upon an immense balloon that was fast descending toward the high roofs that clustered on all sides about his comfortable rooms on — St., New York.

Something was wrong. He could readily detect this in the unsteady wavering of the gaily-striped air-ship. And so, too, thought the crowd that he now saw had gathered in the street below.

Evidently the aeronaut had lost control of his craft. Lower still it tottered, and now were visible several arms outstretched in the vain appeal for aid.

Not a sound escaped the spell-bound multitude in the streets, for in a moment more the fate of the doomed adventurers must be decided. Suddenly two human forms dropped from the loosened basket and struck with a fearful thud against the elevated railway, then rebounded to the street below a mass of mangled flesh. Death was instantaneous. With one impulse the throng surged about the bodies; but Dr. Gardner's



eyes were still fixed upon the balloon, for as if relieved by the rapid lightening of its burden it gave a spirited sweep upward, then passed over his own roof.

Hastening to his back windows, which overlooked a paved court, he threw himself into a chair, and strained his gaze in search of the wrecked pleasure-craft, to which one other figure clung with the might of desperation.

One large tree, spared by the pruning axe of the city architect, shaded the court; and into the wide-spreading boughs of this tree, did the powerless balloon now descend, its ropes becoming hopelessly entangled. Clinging fast to whatever offered support, a young girl with dark, terror-stricken eyes, met his look of horror, as with the reassuring words already quoted, Weldon Gardner rushed down to the rescue.

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Even as he gained the spot, shouting to the men in service to bring a ladder, a number of persons had penetrated to the court, and were now collected around the tree, uttering excited comments upon the disaster.

With all possible speed the young physician reached the sufferer, but unconsciousness had already closed her eyes to all danger. Bearing the light form from the entangling meshes, the doctor ascended to his consulting-room, and deposited his burden upon a couch. Summoning his housekeeper, he dismissed the gaping followers, and proceeded to examine the death-like form he had preserved from mutilation.

The patient seemed to be about eighteen years old, and bore unmistakable evidences of the lady in her attire.

Mercifully forbearing to restore her senses till after his skillfull examination, the doctor could discover no broken limbs, and nothing now remained but to enable her to speak for herself as to her condition. After a persistent use of restoratives, the anxious attendants were rewarded by seeing the color flutter back into the pallid cheeks, and the long eyelashes quiver with returning life.

Her first words were: "Lucien! Maggie! we are lost!" Then a strong shudder convulsed her slight frame, and with a startled cry she attempted to spring up.

"Be careful," gently remonstrated the doctor, laying a detaining hand upon her. "Tell me—are you hurt anywhere?"

"I don't know—I think not—oh! who are you? Where am I? Where are the others? Were they killed? Oh! it was too horrible!" and the agitated speaker burst into a passion of tears so violent as to alarm her watchers.

Leaving her to the housekeeper, Dr. Gardner quickly prepared and administered a soothing potion. Then, enjoining absolute quiet, he drew the blinds, and proceeded downstairs to learn of the ill-fated companions of his patient. The crowd still lingered about the spot, although the bodies had been removed to await a claimant. Nothing was known except that the balloon had ascended that morning from one of the city squares, and that, as frequently happened, a party of young people had gone up to get a bird's eye view of the metropolis. Who they were did not yet appear.

Several hours passed, and still the rescued girl slept the dreamless sleep induced by the nervous shock and the narcotic draught of the doctor. Patiently the housekeeper sat and watched.

As twilight fell, she gave a sigh and opened her large eyes in surprise upon the strange face beside her. Taking advantage of the opportune moment, Mrs. Buford removed the pongee walking suit from the drowsy girl, and then gently enfolding her in a soft white



wrapper, the kind matron assisted her to the bed which had been prepared, the girl submitting with a bewildered look of questioning wonder, and finally sinking back gratefully into slumber.

And here Weldon Gardner came before retiring for the night.

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Softly touching the delicate wrist in its dainty frill, he noted the somewhat fitful pulsations of the disturbed life-centers. Bending above the tell-tale heart-beats, his practiced ear assured him that ere long the deep repose of his charge would effectually restore her to health.

How like chiseled marble she looked, lying there in her absolute helplessness beneath his stranger gaze! How pure the white brow, with its clustering rings of glossy hair! How exquisitely fine the white hand to which the dimples of babyhood yet clung! How classic the contour of her face, into which already the warm hue of health was creeping! A heavy sigh escaped him as he noted each perfection of outline. Who was this lovely stranger? And what could she be to him?

“Why was I ever such a dupe?” he said in his heart. “Fettered—fettered for life!”

But suddenly realizing that except in his professional capacity he had no right thus to intrude upon her slumbers, the young physician turned from the enchanting picture.

“How is she now, sir?” respectfully inquired the housekeeper.

“Fairly well,” he replied cheerfully; “I do not think she is hurt, except a few bruises, which we must look after. She was thrown pretty hard against that tree. To-morrow she will be able to give an account of herself. We can do nothing toward finding her friends before that time. Call, if she should become restless,” and the young man retired to his own apartment, there to ponder deeply, as he had never before pondered in his life.

Some days later the following letter was posted by Weldon Gardner:

NEW YORK, September 20, 1879.

“My Dear Aunt:—

“Your kind letter reminds me that never, in all these years of boyhood grown ripe, has duty come to me in as repulsive a form as now, I tell you, shocked as you may feel when you read the words, that I would rather put a bullet through my head than meet Evelyn Howard at this time! Why couldn't she stay in England? And what cursed folly induced my parents to thus bind me for life to one I had never seen? True, I submitted. But you know with what an appeal my dying mother besought my compliance, and what could I do? I cared for no one else. How was I to foresee that the tie would ever be so intensely galling? “I know all that you would say about honor, manhood, and all the category of virtues. I know them all. Nor am I willing to act the scoundrel just yet. But I must have time; I can *not* marry that girl now. Nor will I consent to meet her yet. Let her think I am out of town, sick, busy, *dead*; anything, till I can screw my courage to the sticking point.” About the balloon tragedy—yes, you heard correctly of my figuring in the

matter. The girl is Miss Lina Dent, of Brooklyn, and I am happy to report that she is entirely recovered, though deeply afflicted at the fearful death of her friends.



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It seems that they had, in a spirit of fun, gone up in the balloon, feeling confident that their adventure was, to say the least, of somewhat doubtful propriety. They did not think of danger. The cowardly desertion of the aeronaut, as soon as he could leap to a roof in safety, precipitated their fall. "The young victims, Lucien and Maggie Taylor, were too much frightened to hold to their frail support. Their tragic fate has plunged an excellent household into mourning. Bitterly my new acquaintance lamented her folly in consenting to the excursion; but how can a man in his senses add to her condemnation when she looks through such eyes, and speaks with such lips? Not I, I assure you. "Miss Dent is visiting a relative in Brooklyn, and in my character of physician, I have been kindly received. The strangest part of it all is the odd way that girl looked at me when she knew enough to look rationally at anybody; and her obstinate persistence in leaving my house before she was fit to go. And it was all I could do to induce her to see me again. But her cousin was quite cordial, and now I may claim to have established an easy footing at the house. But about Evelyn Howard—don't, my dear aunt, if you have a spark of mercy, require me to see her now."

* * * * *

A month passed by, and October, in glorious tints of autumnal beauty, shed its light over the city. In a handsome drawing-room on Brooklyn Heights sat Weldon Gardner and Lina Dent. The young girl wore a soft white dress, and her figure was replete with roseate health and beauty.

The young physician was pleading strongly and earnestly, gazing into the eloquent eyes before him as if his very life hung upon their favor.

"But I know so little of you, Dr. Gardner," was her remonstrance in answer to his ardent suit, "true you have earned my life-long gratitude—"

"Don't mention that, if you have any regard for me," he interrupted, in a sort of disdain.

"Yes," she urged, "I must mention it. To you I owe my life, and perhaps, my reason. Of course I know you in all points of family, position, and professional success; but your own true self—how can I know that you will secure my happiness? Is there nothing you can tell me of yourself which will reassure me?"

And the bright, honest look of her eyes robbed her plain words all possible sting.

"First, tell me that you love me," he argued, "let me know that it would be sweet to you to place your happiness in my keeping. At least you can do this. You know if you love me."

She listened with averted look.



“And if I confess that I love you,” she said at length, in a low voice; “if I do this, would it not be mockery to learn, when too late, that I had made a mistake?”

“But, in heaven’s name, Lina, what can you mean? Why do you doubt me? What is there to tell? I could have no secrets—”



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Then there rushed to his memory with a force that sent the blood to his brow and almost took his breath, the conviction that he *had* a secret from her—that he *was* deceiving her—that it was unmanly to seek her love with a lie on his lips. For a brief season his engagement had been forgotten, or ignored. He had hugged to his breast with unreasoning apathy the theory that the present was enough to consider—that the future must care for itself—that once his promised wife, Lina Dent should be his if all the world conspired against it. But now came the hated thought that Evelyn Howard stood between him and the precious one who had been his day-star since the night when he had nursed her back to life.

Starting up, he strode back and forth, not noting the pale cheeks and startled eyes of the girl who watched him in ill-repressed anxiety.

At length, sitting down beside her, he seized her soft fingers with a grasp of which he was hardly aware. Then instantly relaxing the rigor of his clasp, he pleaded:

“Let me hold this pure little hand while I confess to you, my only love, that your clear eyes have read my soul—that I have deceived you—that I love you beyond all else this world contains; but that the most cruel fate man ever before suffered, keeps me from you, unless, indeed, your love will help me to remove the barrier.”

And while the young girl listened, with drooping head, he told her of his hated engagement—of the painful circumstances that had betrayed him into compliance.

“But I never dreamed of this sort of Nemesis! I could not have been in my senses to thus barter my freedom forever.”

Slowly withdrawing her hand, the girl said, still in the same low tones:

“And you do not love your betrothed?”

“Love her?” he echoed. “I tell you, Lina, I have never even seen her. Her people have been abroad for an age. She was in New York a few weeks ago and, I understand, took offense at my continued absence from her side, and went back to England. This is what she left for me;” and plunging his hand into his breast pocket he selected from his note-case a fragrant little billet-doux, formally desiring Dr. Gardner to explain his strange conduct at his leisure—that the next opportunity granted him of seeing Evelyn Howard must be of his own seeking.

There was a pause after the reading of this aggrieved, dignified little message.

“And can you, as a gentleman of honor, reconcile your neglect of the writer?” asked Lina Dent, in a voice in which a cadence of scorn involuntarily sounded.



“Honor! Can’t you see that honor was what kept me from her? Such honor as a man feels when he knows that he is poised between a Scylla and a Charybdis of desperate fatality?”

“There can be but one answer to all this, Dr. Gardner,” the girl replied with proud dignity. “It would ill become me to sit in judgment on you after what I have received at your hands; but you will acknowledge that it was cruelly inconsiderate to seek my love while a barrier such as this existed. How do I know that you will not love your betrothed after you have seen her?”



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“Love her—love any other than you, my beautiful, peerless one? Do not torture me with such a supposition. I care nothing for Evelyn Howard; I do not know her; I do not care to know her; nor is she in the least dependent upon me for happiness. She has vast wealth, and can command whatever fate she chooses.”

“But wealth cannot buy happiness,” she sadly replied, “and our course is clear. I can see you no more till you have met your betrothed and received your dismissal—or,”—and her clear cheek paled again—“made up your mind to fulfill your promise to her. Farewell! I thank you for your unwise devotion to me, but I can see you no more.”

“Oh, Lina, do not doom me to this total separation. Why it seems an eternity. Where and when can I see you again? Why didn’t I go to that girl when she was here? Fool, coward that I was! And now I cannot leave New York. Grant me some respite, my love—I cannot live without you!”

But much as she sympathized with him she was firm; and when Weldon Gardner left the house, with despair tugging at his heart, the only ray of sunshine that pierced the gloom was the conviction that she did love him—that should anything occur to separate them forever, her heart would plead strongly for him, and her love would strive with his to overcome the barrier.

* * * * *

Months went by, and still Evelyn Howard eluded Weldon Gardner’s pursuit. Bitterly was he punished for his culpable neglect of her. In vain he wrote letters urging her to come to New York. She was traveling with friends and declined to change her course. He followed her to London, to Paris. In vain! She was ever just before him on his journey: always missing, never meeting him. Then he wrote to Lina Dent, beseeching her to relent, since he had done all in his power to carry out her wishes. She did not reply. Then in sullen despair he gave up the pursuit. He carefully avoided going out except to see patients, declined all invitations, and took solitary refuge in the stern exactions of duty.

As the year drew to a close he noticed in the list of arrivals from Europe, Miss Evelyn Howard and her party; and among the personals he saw that the beautiful Miss Howard would appear at Governor B’s reception on the next evening. He had received cards to this party, and now, with the fierce desire to end his torture reawakened, he prepared to accept the invitation. As he entered the brilliant rooms his eye fell upon the form and face of Lina Dent, attired in an exquisite costume, and looking far more radiant than in his wildest dreams he had ever pictured her.

Feasting upon her loveliness, with eyes hungry in their wistfulness, he was about to approach her when she suddenly looked toward him and their eyes met. He caught the quick flash of feeling; he knew that he was still beloved! But even as he drank in the



delicious confirmation of his hopes, she passed him without recognition, and he knew that she would not break her vow—that she would not meet him till he had fulfilled her conditions. Too miserable to seek Miss Howard in the throng, the young physician pleaded an urgent call to a patient, and left his host almost before he had fairly entered upon the festivities.



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One evening, soon after the last fearful disappointment, Dr. Gardner received a note asking him to come to a certain number on Fifth Avenue, and there he should meet Evelyn Howard. She inferred that he had had ample time to learn if he really desired to form her acquaintance, and she was ready now to see him.

Tearing the paper to atoms in sudden irritation and setting his teeth, the young physician was soon at the appointed place, an elegant brown-stone mansion, quite familiar to his eyes in his drives about the city.

He was not left long in suspense. There was a sound of rapid steps descending the stairs, with a frou-frou of silken skirts, and in a moment Lina Dent stood before him, her face aglow with a proud light he had never seen there, and her hands extended in glad welcome.

“You, Lina! You here? You have relented? This is too much happiness!”

Catching both soft white hands in his, he bent his lips to them, full of the rapture he could not speak. He forgot to wonder why she was there. He forgot everything but the love in her eyes and the joyous ring of her voice.

Ere they could be seated the door again opened and admitted an elderly lady, who approached smiling.

“My dear aunt!” exclaimed the young lover. “You, too? This *is* a surprise! What does it all mean? How did you get here, and when?”

The ladies stood smiling at each other and gazing upon him with a significance that indeed clamored for explanation.

“Weldon, is it possible you do not guess?” asked his aunt.

“What? Why, what do you mean? I am all bewildered!” he exclaimed, looking from one to the other till a faint glimmer of the truth began to appear through the mists.

“Stupid boy!” again emphasized the lady, “whom did you come here to see?”

Quickly glancing at the beautiful, radiant, still-smiling face of the young girl, and then at the impressive features of the elder lady, Weldon Gardner, with bated breath and a dazed expression in his startled eyes, exclaimed:

“You—are—Evelyn Howard—you?”

“Exactly so. Doctor Gardner—Evelina Dent Howard—at your service!”



As she spoke, she placed her hand in his, and asked, in the liquid tones whose cadences he so well remembered, "Have you been punished enough for your unknighly scorn of the girl you condemned without trial?"

"Oh, forgive!" he pleaded, drawing her to a seat beside him. "I see it all now. What a dolt you must have thought me! How could you ever have tolerated me?"

"There is the conspirator," archly said Evelyn, pointing to Mrs. Duke. "She it was who enabled me to deceive you. I wrote to her immediately upon leaving your house for my cousin's, in Brooklyn, and she at once devised the scheme that I have found so hard to carry out. Meanwhile, she never lost sight of you."

It was long before the necessary explanations were exhausted, and when the new day dawned no happier man proudly entered upon his duties than did Weldon Gardner.



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* * * * *

It is upon a soft September afternoon that we last see Dr. Gardner and his lovely wife. Within a snug little arbor beside the lake in Central Park the two sit side by side, watching the idly-floating pleasure crafts, and noting the lazy ripples of the green wavelets. Their hearts grow tender with a mighty love that finds no language in which to clothe itself.

Every blessing of life is theirs; every cadence that affection knows makes harmony in their words. Gayly-dressed children pass by, some with toy balloons, bounding into air. Evelyn shuddered at even this tiny reminder of her reckless adventure, and clinging to her husband's arm, blesses him and the day that confided her to his keeping. Accident had tested his noble nature as the ordinary course of events never could have done; and now was fulfilled the last wish of his parents, that in Evelyn Howard should Weldon Gardner find the glory of heaven's last, best gift to man.

Hezekiah's Wooing

A FIRESIDE SKETCH

"Walk right in, Mr. Lightus, do," said the cheery voice of the Widow Partridge, as the portly figure of Mr. Hezekiah Lighthouse appeared in her hospitable doorway.

"Thankee, thankee, I don't care if I do, Mis' Patridge," responded the visitor, heavily bringing himself within the family circle.

"How's all?" he asked, comfortably establishing himself in the arm-chair.

"Middlin', thankee," said the widow. "I've been enjoyin' very poor health till lately. Now I seem to be pickin' up a little," as brushing the seat of a rocker with her gingham apron, she sat down at the opposite end of the hearth.

"An' Cicely Ann—how's she?"

"Oh, she—why she's allers the picture o' health. Here she comes now."

As she spoke, a fair, rosy-cheeked girl entered the cheerful room, with her arms full of painting materials. These she deposited upon the table, then dutifully greeted the visitor.

"An' how do you like them new fol-de-rols, Cicely Ann?" inquired Hezekiah, eyeing askance the collection.



The fol-de-rols consisted of some wooden plaques of different sizes, which the new art craze had brought to the widow's cottage.

"She's gettin' along right nice, I think," replied the widow, looking proudly at her one chick. "You see, she's a lot o' darnin' an' one thing another to do, but she finds time for her landskips and things."

"Well, mebbe so," assented Hezekiah grudgingly. "For my part there's nothing set's a gal off like spinnin' an' weavin', an' it puts more money in her pocket, besides."

"La, Mr. Lightus," said the widow deprecatingly, "spinnin' an' weavin's gone out o' fashion. Gals will be gals, and they mostly go in for fashion, you know."

Cicely's red lip curled in scorn as she applied herself vigorously to her plaque, where the inevitable girl with muff and umbrella was stumbling into a snowdrift.

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Hezekiah picked up the widow's daily paper which, by the way, he largely depended on for the news. Silence reigned for a while, save for the rustle of the sheet. The click-clack of the widow's knitting needles, and the rapid plying of Cicely's brush, were varied at last by the girl surreptitiously pulling a note out of her jaunty apron pocket.

As she read it a smile broke over the dimpled features, and in a moment more she pushed the table from her and left the room. Swiftly she sped to the big apple tree where her trystings were held with Rufus, her playmate and lover.

Hezekiah slowly raised his head, and laying down the paper, said thoughtfully: "Pears like the gal gits skittisher every day. Do you reckon she'll ever come to like me?"

"Why, I dunno why she wouldn't," ventured the widow with an encouraging smirk.

"Well, she don't seem to, no way." Then looking suspiciously through the window. "Where's she gone to?"

"Oh, nowheres I reckon," said the mother soothingly, "nowheres in partic'ler. She's allers around."

Another silence, during which the visitor carefully noted the land, stock and crop items in the paper, then took his leave. But not till he had cast a lingering look behind and said: "This is about the comfortablest place a feller could drop into, in my opinion."

It was some minutes after when the truant Cicely re-entered the little keeping-room, her cheeks and eyes bright with happiness.

"Oh, mother, wish me joy! Rufus has asked me to be his wife."

"Mercy on us, Cicely!" exclaimed the widow in a sort of terror, "and you want to marry him?"

"Of course I do," proudly said the girl; "and I mean to marry him."

"Oh, Cicely, my child! and what will Mr. Lightus do—him that's been comin' here so patient, off an' on?"

"Mr. Lighthouse!" disdainfully echoed the girl. "Do you suppose I would have that old goose—old enough to be my grandfather!"

"Old goose! Fie, Cicely, to talk so disrespectful of your pa's best friend. He's well-to-do an' has got the finest place in the county. Think how nice we'd be fixed, child. We'd never have to work no more," and the widow sighed as the girl looked into her face for the congratulations she expected in vain.



“Well, mother, I can’t help it. I am willing to work and so is Rufus. He is as industrious and steady as the day is long. I shouldn’t mind having Mr. Lighthouse for an uncle, but husband—pshaw!” and the pretty features screwed themselves into a comical grimace.

“Child, child, I’m disappointed and no mistake. Here’s that man’s been a comin’ here all these weeks, an’ while he ain’t asked for you, it’s clear he wants you. An’ now I’ve got to tell him you won’t have him. There’s that moggidge on the house, too. But that’s allers the way—troubles don’t never come single,” and the sigh became a whimper.



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“Now, don’t you worry, mother,” said Cicely, clasping her arms about the still fair neck, “don’t worry; we will come out all right, mortgage and all.”

Taking fresh courage, the widow again pressed the claims of the portly wooer, but what chance had she against the combined powers of young love and the daughter’s stronger nature.

Time passed. Almost every evening found Hezekiah at the cottage, but though persistent, things did not apparently make much progress. At last the stiffness of the customary interviews seemed to break.

“Mis’ Patridge,” he said, getting very red in the face and awkward as to hands and feet, “Cicely Ann gits worse every day. Ain’t there no chance of her puttin’ up with me at all?”

“Why, yes, I reckon so,” bashfully said the widow. “She’s young and foolish, you know. You can’t expect gals to be sensible and sober down like they will when they get holt of some wise person tha’ll train ’em.”

“Well,” sighed the wooer, “I guess I might as well stop comin’. ’Taint no use to be forever worritin’ after anything. I did think, howsomever, it ’ud be sorter nice to have us four live together. Young folks makes a house kinder lively. But I don’t git on, somehow; so I guess I might as well hang up my fiddle an’ quit.” And the ancient wooer slowly rose to his full height.

“Us four!” repeated the petrified widow, mouth and eyes open to their widest extent.

“Yes—us four,” continued Hezekiah. “I was thinkin’, you know, that bein’ as this young feller Rufus what’s-his-name ’peared to be sweet on the gal, mebbe you’d take to me an’ we’d all git spliced together. But she don’t like me and wouldn’t treat me right. I couldn’t stand fusses an’ the like.”

“La, Mr. Lightus, how you do astonish me,” faintly ejaculated the flushed widow, her comely face crimson to the roots of her soft brown hair.

“You don’t say!” exclaimed the rapidly enlightened Hezekiah, rousing to something like animation. “Did you think—didn’t you know—well, I declare, I don’t actually believe you did. Now ain’t it a puzzle, begad!”

While he jerked out his amazed sentences, his companion, fairly overcome with the revelation that dawned upon her for the first time, buried her face in her hands.

“Mis’ Patridge,” timidly said the agitated wooer, approaching nearer, “you don’t say—that is, do you mean to say that if Cicely Ann could like me well enough to not be sassy around the house, an’ keepin’ you oncomfortable about it, you an’ me could hitch on an’ be pardners? You don’t mean it now, do you?”



“Mean it!” murmured the widow, her fair cheeks aglow with suddenly-stirred enthusiasm. “I’m only too happy, Mr. Lightus, I never thought—”

But at this juncture the rejuvenated wooer ventured to clasp his rough but honest arms about the blushing prize he had won.

At this juncture, also, Cicely and Rufus happened in, but beat a hasty and giggling retreat, as they rapidly took in the situation.



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All's well that ends well. Hezekiah Lighthouse married the Widow Partridge, and set young Rufus up in business. As a father the spirited Cicely yielded him the respect and affection he deserved.

She made but one stipulation. On the marriage morn she whispered the earnest entreaty: "Mother, *don't* let him call me Cicely *Ann!*"

A Summer Daisy

A PASTORAL

"Heighho!" yawned Carroll Hamilton, picking up his long legs from the grass, "this is not making hay while the sun shines," and he proceeded leisurely to place a camp stool in position, erect an easel, and spread out sketching materials.

A few bold, rapid strokes transferred a pretty bit of rural landscape to the canvas, and this much gained, the amateur artist lit a fine Havana and lazily drifted off again into reverie. His thoughts were not of a pleasant nature. Why couldn't a man do as he liked in this world? Here the particular man in his mind—to-wit his own agreeable self, had devoted his twenty-four years to acquiring sundry dazzling accomplishments, zonly to have his interest in life dampened by a matrimonial scheme, hatched long ago in the fertile brains of his own parents and the parents of his prospective dulcinea in conspiracy.

Yes, a regular wet blanket had awaited his return from Italia's classic shores. What an insufferable bore to be pledged, promised, all but tied to an unknown female whose only merit, he wilfully wagered, lay in her invincible ground rents.

"Why, my son," his doting mother said, "think of it—two hundred thousand dollars in her own right, and all yours for the asking."

He did think of it; and he vowed in his own mind to do something—anything; run away, commit suicide, before he would join himself for life to any girl he had never seen, especially old Thornton's daughter, who seemed so willing to jump at him. Not he. In vain they urged him to cultivate the fair damsel. Not till he had braced his nerves with country air, he said. This tonic secured, he graciously consented to be introduced, but would reserve the ratification of the wedding treaty till later.

What's the use in having fathers and mothers, anyhow? They only plague the life out of one. They don't ever think of letting a fellow alone once in a while. They—

What other heinousness they would be guilty of would never be shaped into thought, for at this moment down came a dainty little slipper, with a dainty little rosette, from the tree



above, plump on to his sketch, and a violent start and a glance upward revealed a bewildering little pink-stockinged foot, which was the daintiest of all.

The abrupt spring to his feet brought down the camp stool, cigar, easel and all, but not the foot, for the rest of the apparition was caught and hidden by the clustering young shoots of the apple tree.



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A whistle—quite involuntary, if not polite—was shaping itself a brief distance below his staring eyes, when, recovering himself and tiptoeing to his full height, he peered into the branches and said, a little irrelevantly:

“I beg pardon!”

Two milk-white hands parted the leaves, and a flushed pink-and-white face appeared at the opening.

“It’s only me,” cooed a musical voice, and as if the sound had unlocked the pent-up silence, two rows of pearls shone between two red lips, two large blue eyes twinkled with fun, and as charming a peal of laughter as was ever vouchsafed to mortal ears rippled merrily on the air.

“And who is me, may I ask?” rather saucily asked the routed artist.

“Why, Daisy—Daisy Merrifield; don’t you know?”

“Why, no, I don’t know; that is, I didn’t know, but of course I know now; and I’m delighted to know.”

At all these “knows”, the maiden laughed her merry laugh again.

“May I ask what you are doing up there?”

“Doing nothing—just what you are doing down here.”

“Ah, but I was doing something very nice down here, only you have nearly spoiled it,” and with mock regret the young man picked up the slipper and comically surveyed its Cinderella proportions.

“So I did,” was the regretful reply, “you see it was awfully poky, having to sit so still. I must have grown desperate at last and kicked it off—I am sorry.”

“Well, I am not one bit sorry,” he said. “I’ll do another picture, and next time I’ll sketch the tree,” he added, his brown eyes twinkling with amusement.

“But how did you get up there, and how will you get down?” were his next queries, putting the little slipper into the pocket of his jacket.

“Well, I climbed up,” she admitted. “I suppose I’ll have to jump down. Reach out your hands,” she cried, and a sudden rustle showed she was preparing to spring. “Good gracious me!” was her next exclamation, as the willing hands were extended, “my hair is all caught.”



“Hold perfectly still till I get up there,” he said with concern, and replacing the stool, he was soon on a level with the fair prisoner.

Patiently he disentangled the long golden locks from the infringing boughs, and gathering them all in her little hands, she gave them a vigorous twist forward over her face out of further mischief.

“Now, my slipper, please,” as the young fellow retreated. Obediently restoring the truant article, she deftly adjusted it, and cried, “All ready!”

It is hardly to be wondered at that her descent was arrested, and her rounded form tenderly lowered to terra firma.

“I like this out here, don’t you?” was her next remark, shaking out her fairy muslin skirts and placidly surveying the scene. “I’ve been out every day these—let me see—yes, three days. Aunt Hepsy says I’ll get tanned, but I don’t mind. You know Aunt Hepsy, don’t you? Everybody does.”



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"No, but I'd like to," he said, and he meant it.

"She lives at the farm-house yonder—she and Uncle Reuben. They are the best old souls! So this is what you were doing," she abruptly added, picking up the sketch. "You wouldn't think I could draw, but I can," with a proud little toss of the hair.

"I would think you could do anything," he gallantly replied.

But she was intent upon the picture, with its bold, true outlines.

"This isn't bad," was her sage criticism.

"Didn't you wear a hat, or something?" he asked, looking around and up into the tree.

"No—yes—I wore this," and pulling from her pocket a large blue square of cotton, she tied it under her chin with the utmost naivete.

"It's Aunt Hepsy's," she explained. "There, do you hear that bell? That's for dinner," and taking a tiny watch from an elf-like pocket, she added, "Only half-past eleven. But, to be sure, we ate breakfast with the chickens. It's horrible."

"Don't you live here?"

"Live here?" she echoed. "No, I'm only visiting. Good-bye, I must go. I am much obliged, though," and as if the recollection were overpowering, she again burst out into her ringing laugh.

"It was too funny you didn't see me; and I so scared I was afraid to breathe. Good-bye, I hope you will have a good time with your picture."

"But you are not going to dismiss me, are you? Mayn't I take you home?"

"Yes, if you like; only you musn't stay long. I've got to do Rollin and Plutarch while I'm out here, and can't be bothered."

With difficulty repressing an explosion, the young man walked beside the woodland sprite, with his goods and chattels thrown across his shoulders, and found himself falling—yes, tumbling—headlong in love. Such an airy, fairy, exquisite piece of humanity it had never been his fortune to behold.

"You are too young to worry your brain with dry old fossils like Rollin and Plutarch," he said, with what gravity he could.

"I am a person of twenty," she affirmed with demure satisfaction, as she tripped along in a manner quite enchanting.



At the door of the farm-house a fair, motherly face smiled a welcome from the border of a spotless cap, then sobered a little at the sight of a stranger.

“This is Aunt Hepsy,” simply said Daisy, “and you are—?” hesitating.

A flush not born of the sunshine mounted to his brow as with swift thought he saw the shoals ahead, and did not dare reveal his identity.

“John Smith,” he said, with his natural ease.

“Oh!” half exclaimed Daisy, upon hearing such a very common name from such very uncommon lips; but checking it, and softly humming a tune, she retired to an inner room to prepare for dinner.

This episode was the beginning of elysium for John Smith. Every day saw him at the farm-house. Every day revealed some new charm in the Daisy he had found. She was as industrious and sensible as she was petite and pretty. Rollin and Plutarch were discarded for modern authors, or for simple chit-chat about mamma, papa, and little ones at home.



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But when the day came for John Smith to tell his love, he met with a shock that quite paralyzed his senses.

Looking up with her big blue eyes, she said:

“You mustn’t talk like that; I’m engaged.”

“Engaged?” he stammered, “engaged?”

“Yes, I’m engaged.”

“And to whom? May I ask?”

“Oh, I can’t tell you his name; it’s a secret yet. He is a person I never saw.”

“Sheer madness!” was his horrified ejaculation. “Never saw him, and going to marry him?”

“I promised, you know; I must, if he wants me,” she said in her unconcerned way.

“But don’t you love *me*, Daisy?”

“Yes, I suppose I do, but that can’t be helped; a promise is a promise.”

“Who is to prevent it?” he exclaimed impatiently. “I say it shall be helped.”

There was not time for further rhapsodies. Aunt Hepsy appeared with a telegram, calling Daisy home; and home she went next day, leaving Mr. John Smith in despair. In vain he laid siege to Aunt Hepzibah and Uncle Reuben; they could not help him.

Then, in a mighty wrath, he too went home, and desperately resolved to have it out with the Thornton girl, one way or the other; but not “the other” if Daisy could be brought to terms.

It was easy travelling where the way was all prepared. So a lovely moonlight evening found him in Squire Thornton’s parlor. In a few moments there floated down to him from the invisible upper regions a cloud of blue muslin, and the laughing face of Daisy Merrifield was before him.

“Oh, Daisy, what a surprise! and how sweet you are!” as impulsively he strained her to his heart. “What joy to find you here!”

“Don’t crush my dress,” she said, righting up the ruffles; “it’s new. Yes, I am here. Didn’t you come to see me?”

“No—that is—I came to see Miss Thornton,” and his face fell.



“There is no Miss Thornton,” she said, her dimples playing mischievously. “It is only *I—now* don’t you know?”

“But how is it? I was told—I understood—”

“Pshaw! you stupid!” she said, with a bewitching pout, “if you had been a little more civil, you would have known that I am Mrs. Thornton’s daughter—not Mr. Thornton’s; that mamma is mamma, but papa isn’t papa, and—”

But in an ecstasy of surprise and joy the rest of her sentence was entirely smothered.

“And you knew from the first?” he asked, reproachfully.

“Not from the first, but almost. They were all in the plot. I meant to snub you outright, only—well, somehow you didn’t look as horrid as you really were! The ‘John Smith’ was almost too much for me, but I stood it. Then when the letter came—it was well for you I had seen you under the tree. So you wouldn’t marry the heiress,” she said, archly. “I did my very best to teach you a lesson, young man. Have you learned it?”

The answer was fervently though silently given the merry, rosy, smiling lips.

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Treesa

A CHARACTER SKETCH

They called her Treesa. She was not young. That she had ever been was hard to realize. Whatever her childhood, and however the years had brought her up to woman's estate, there was no footprint upon the worn face of the gladsome time we call youth. No light in the eye of other and happier days. No echo in the quiet heart, of bounding pulses, or ever a sweet enthusiasm. The treadmill of duty in life's most trivial task, enthralled her every faculty. Her daily round was in a large hotel—an arena of toil circumscribed by four brick walls. Her domain was the parlor floor; that sacred area of rosy vistas and costly suites, where she was as proud to tread as a king in his royal glory. Where beauty and fashion made for her a panorama of short glimpses amid pauses of broom and duster.

The maids on the other floors might earn the wage just as honorably; Treesa permitted no trespass upon her exalted territory. The bridal chambers, the private sitting rooms, the luxurious sleeping apartments—these were her pride and her joy. The Excelsior had a reputation, national and international. Princes and potentates had slumbered in Treesa's chambers. The "nobility and the gentry" had been feted there. Year after year her pale eyes had watched over the welfare of distinguished visitors, American and foreign. They had seen the help come and go; she was still the "girl of the parlor floor." Discreet, silent, honest, they might well allow her a share of caprice. "Cranky" they called her, yet no one found fault. She neglected no duty. The lady manager of the interior was not always the same. She changed from time to time; Treesa was always the same, and always there. At length there came a dainty little woman, full of native pluck, who was born to rule, and rule she did, to the limit of her jurisdiction. Though so far apart, a kindred chord was struck between mistress and maid. The high spirit that smouldered in these two never crossed; but with the smallest tangible demonstration they were fast friends. The girl's horizon now bordered a triune interest;—the church, the mistress, and the parlor floor. Gaunt and spare, she trod her beat. Shy of manner, with eyes looking nowhere, she seemed a human machine of the broom. A woman without kith or kin, without a history, and apparently without a memory. Never sick, never absent, never a letter from friends, never a visit away. The old habitues of the house liked her. She gave no sign of favor or disfavor, till at last it was their way to respect her and leave her alone. But whenever a mission of trust was needed Treesa was the one called upon.



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But as the calmest stream is ruffled at some time on its course, so there comes to every human life a shock that upturns hidden forces. And this came to Treesa. It was when she was one day summoned to the private office downstairs: that dread tribunal for the wrongdoers of the large household—a locality as little heeded by the girl as any other foreign place, albeit there had been new and strange proprietors as the years went by. Without so much as a ripple of excitement upon her homely features, she came down and stood within the door, respectfully awaiting orders. The two arbiters of her destiny were in close conference upon ways and means. Expense must be cut down. There must be a weeding out. Raising his head and looking in some curiosity at the queer apparition, the new partner said: “Are you Teresa O’Toole?”

“Me name is that same, sir,” she said, meeting the eyes. “An’ what thin, sir?” she added, as for a moment he was silent.

“Yes—ah—” he went on, this time not exactly confronting the expectant face—“We’ve been thinking, Teresa—we were just saying—that you are getting along in years now, and—ah—the fact is, we think you ought to have a rest. Some one younger, and stronger, ought to relieve you, and give you a chance to pick up. You are a good girl,” with encouraging justice, “a very good girl, and have been faithful and honest. But we —” he hesitated, as Treesa’s lean face suddenly darkened with an unwonted flush. Then she broke out:

“An’ is it me dischairge ye’d be afther givin’ me, sir?”

“Well, yes, about that, it amounts to that, I suppose,” admitted the great man. “You see, my good woman,” he ventured softly, noting the breakers ahead, “the fact is—”

“Well, thin,” she burst forth in righteous wrath, placing her hard, red arms akimbo, and struggling to loose her tongue, “I’ll be afther tellin’ yees, I’ll not take a dischairge from yees, sir! It’s here I’ve been this fifty year, an’ more. I was the first gurll in the house, for sure I come before the likes of yees was born an’ before yees iver darkened the doors. It’s no fault can be found with me. I’ll stay right here!” and turning, she went out.

There was silence in the office. Then the senior partner, his eye twinkling, spoke:

“What are we going to do about it?”

“Why, nothing”, drily said the other, “nothing, I suppose; you heard what she said, I presume she will stay on.”

And stay on she did, her one dominant idea as fixed as the polar star. As the years rolled by she might have rested from her labors, but for this sense of devotion to duty. Even a monthly pittance will count through the ages; so Treesa’s savings came at last to foot up into the thousands. Not even good Father Clement could have told the amount,



or where she kept it. Like herself, it was a mystery. She continued to hoard and to hide, with no misgiving of loss by thief, or by accident; with no forewarning of danger. Yet dire calamity was impending.



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It was past midnight when the veteran chambermaid was awakened by the sound of crackling wood and the smell of stifling smoke. To spring out of bed was the work of a moment, the aged limbs obedient to her call; then all her faculties alert, she thrust her hand into a hidden recess of the mattress, and clutching a bulky package from its depths, made her way out into the corridor, where the smoke was still thicker, on down the stairs from the servants' dormitory to the floor below. Staggering to the manager's door she pounded with all her strength till those within were aroused; and dizzy from fright and half-suffocation, she ran to the fire alarm, banging the gong till doors flew open right and left, and the halls were alive with people. The cry of "Fire!" on all sides now added to the din. More alarms were turned in till ample help was at hand. While the hotel manager's orders were being obeyed, and the guests were deserting their rooms for greater safety in the lobby below, Treesa was struggling to get back to the servant's floor, whence now issued screams of terror, as, for the first time, the flames were seen creeping in close proximity to the maid's quarters. In vain the firemen, who were now cutting holes in the floor to insert the hose, tried to intercept her. Bent upon serving her fellow-servants, she disappeared through the blinding smoke. Crawling flat upon her face up the stairs to avoid the onset of the fumes, the girl reached the glass door that imprisoned the terrified creatures, burst it through with one powerful blow, and forced them out upon the fire escape, where now, too, the firemen's ladders were seen manned by the helmeted brigade. All bruised and bleeding from the splintered glass, and still clutching fast the rescued package, Treesa turned to retrace her steps, her only thought now being to save the parlor floor and its treasures. Again she eluded those who would have guarded her from danger, and made a hurried dash for the stairway, when a sudden rush of flame, now fanned by the air, blinded her, and she fell to the landing, dropping the bulk of her holdings, where the fire greedily licked it to destruction.

Tender hands lifted her and conveyed her, crushed and unconscious, to a temporary couch, where it was found, when the surgeon came, that her hip was dislocated. To the mistress alone would she unloose what her bleeding hand still held, as she whispered, "Put it away, safe—Masses for me soul—Father Clement."

But Treesa did not die. The morning papers rang with her heroism, but none then knew that she had lost the hoarded earnings of a life-time; that the one package saved represented but a small proportion of her treasure. She was taken to a hospital, and, fortunately for her peace of mind, the house was closed for repairs. During the weeks of building, the old bones were mending. The sufferer counted the days with jealous watching. When an agony of fear seized upon her lest she might never go back, only the mistress or the kindly priest had power to quiet her, She was promised over and over again that she should not be supplanted.



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When the hotel opened anew, the daily press blazoned to the world the fact, giving a personal paragraph to the officials, and including a list of well-known names, among them the humble one of Teresa O'Toole, who had been a chambermaid there during sixty years. This scrap of paper was held fast in the horny fingers, and seemed to the fevered senses to keep alive the link between her and the only home she knew.

Hither she was borne at last to a small room that was to be her portion and her pension forevermore. Her old quarters, austere and clean and bare, had been effaced by the carpenter's hammer, and this corner retreat had been partitioned from a domestic recess in the rear. But it was on the parlor floor, that fetich of a devoted life. Crippled and useless, Treesa was an object of unobtrusive care. She kept her shrunken savings about her person, more unwilling than ever to trust the unexplored fields of finance. She grew querulous. She must be getting to her work again. Would the mistress be after letting her earn something—on the parlor floor, she tremulously added. Smiling sadly, permission was granted. Fondly the old creature took up her broom and duster—bought anew for her—and limped painfully toward the beloved rooms—the bridal chambers—the choicest suites where beauty and fashion came. What a journey now! The grand parlors and long corridors were interminable vistas of elegance and luxury. And—ah! what was that clinging to the velvet carpet pile? A bit of paper carelessly let fall? And—yes, was there dust on the polished marble of yon table? Alas! that her dim eyes should live to behold the desecration. What shiftless wretch was doing the parlor floor, and she a useless block in her room!

The shock told. She staggered to a gorgeous sofa near the offending bit of rubbish, and sunk down in the act of reaching for it. This was the beginning of the end. Lying on her bed sleep deserted the fading eyes. An attendant was provided, who grew accustomed to mutterings she could not understand. She ceased to listen. In pity the mistress came often and sat beside the couch. She listened and understood. She gathered the last wishes of the dying, and received as a sacred charge all that the sufferer had to leave. Still the angel of death tarried, until sweet peace shed a radiance over the departing soul, whose faith was steadfast to church and heaven.

At the first faint ray of dawn the mistress arose and went to her. The bed was empty, the nurse asleep. Following the instinct of the moment, the lady hastened along the quiet corridors to where the night taper showed the still form of the devoted veteran stretched out on the thick, soft carpet, her cold fingers clasping the new broom and duster.

My First Jury Case

THE DOG WITNESS

The court-house was crowded to its utmost capacity. Women as well as men were there to hear the arguments in the case of the Commonwealth against William Grant for the alleged murder of John Belt.



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Grant was a young man of handsome exterior and pleasing manners. He sat in the prisoner's box, and near him, closely veiled, was his beautiful girlish wife, with her arm around a fine, manly boy, and her head bowed upon his sunny curls.

Near the group were the surviving relatives of the dead man, consisting of the wife, mother and daughter. Their faces were heavy and stolid, and their whole appearance indicated not only the lower walks of life, but the existence of evil passions and aggressive natures.

Belt had owned a small grocery some fifteen miles from town, in a wild glen at the mouth of a shallow stream that flowed into the Kentucky river. The region was for a long time sparsely settled; but the establishing of a government distillery and a railroad station had led to an increase of population, so that young Grant was induced to locate there and open a shop for provisions and other supplies, that line of business having been the one chosen from his boyhood.

From the first Belt, who was one of the few German settlers in that part of the country, resented what he was pleased to call an encroachment upon his trade, and lost no opportunity of showing his ill-feeling. He was a heavy-set, sullen man of about forty-five years of age, and showed a dogged spirit even to his customers. In vain Grant strove, first to pay no attention to his enmity, and afterward to conciliate him. He continued obstinate, and his family were not behind him in giving insults and slights.

Time passed, and Grant prospered. He was obliging and agreeable, and people naturally patronized his store, which he rendered as attractive as his means and good taste would allow. His wife, too, charmed the community by her simple, sweet ways; and motherly old ladies took special interest in her and her babe.

Grant built a neat cottage, and this gave fresh offense. At last Belt, who was a drinking man as well as surly, swore that he would take Grant's life if the latter persisted in remaining there. His trade was falling off, and Grant was the cause. Matters reached a climax then, and Grant armed himself in case of a surprise.

One morning Belt was missing, and his family raised a hue and cry that speedily brought a crowd about the house, just as Grant approached and made the startling announcement that he had shot at a man the night before, and was ready for such investigation as would be proper under the circumstances. He stated that he had been aroused by a filing, grating sound at his bedroom window, which was on the ground floor, and that he sprang from his bed, threw open the front door, and fired upon a figure that retreated rapidly and was soon lost in the darkness.

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Upon this Grant was held in custody, while a party of men went in search of Belt. Hours were spent in vain, when it was suggested that Belt's dog, a vicious mongrel-cur, should be put upon the trail. Accordingly the dog, which was usually seen at Belt's heels, was given the scent of his master's coat, and started rapidly down the road, his nose to the ground. The testimony as elicited at the trial showed that the brute had bounded along to the Grant cottage, leaped upon the window sill, sniffed eagerly about the spot, then ran down the path to a clump of bushes on the river cliff. Here the creature stopped and set up a piteous howl. The pursuing party hastened to the spot, and there lay the body of Belt, who had fallen and died, as the autopsy revealed, of internal hemorrhage produced by a pistol shot. As if to corroborate Grant's statement, a chisel and a pistol were found in the grass under the window of his bedroom.

Such was the history of the case. The absence of any testimony in behalf of the prisoner beyond his own assertion, was painfully evident. His wife supported him in the facts, but the law did not permit a wife to testify in the husband's case, so this evidence was unavailable.

The natural sympathy which death awakens in the human breast, especially a tragic one, had done its work even in the case of so unpopular a man as Belt, and already he was considered a martyr. The desperate lamentations and impoverished condition of his family asserted their claims, and the time of trial found public opinion greatly divided. The spark of envy in every community which had lain dormant as long as the Grants were novelties, sprung into life at their unwonted prosperity, and the gaily painted store and fanciful cottage became eyesores to more than one. Various rumors, like uncanny spirits of air, floated about till the prisoner felt himself sinking into an abyss. Once down, there seemed no power ready to lift him up.

He employed several distinguished attorneys as counsel, and I, a struggling young lawyer, whose ambition was to be worthy the mantle of an illustrious father, was also retained. There was something about the case that inspired me to the utmost of which I was capable. There was no circumstantial evidence against the prisoner. He had frankly owned to shooting the man. The issue rested upon his motive for the deed. What was the provocation? True, Belt may have threatened his life; but Belt was a drunkard, and who attached any importance to his words?

The prosecution endeavored to show that Grant, wearied with the enmity of Belt, and wishing to be rid of him, had enticed him away on the night of the killing, and shot him in cold blood. True, a chisel and pistol had been found, but how easy for the prisoner to have placed them there to carry out his plans! The dead man was proved to be a harmless character, though of intemperate habits and rough ways. His antipathy to Grant was only natural, since the latter had, by ingratiating manners, flashy advertising dodges, and a few modern tricks of trade, ruined the business of the old-fashioned, plain-sailing German.



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In the hands of such skillful manipulators the case grew blacker and blacker, and the face of my client reflected the anguish he saw his wife enduring, and he powerless to comfort. He saw his beautiful, idolized boy the son of a convict, and all that had made life worth the living shattered to the dust. Closer and closer the meshes were weaving about him. The jurors sat with fixed gaze as one by one the speeches were ended. At length the honorable counsel for the prosecution concluded a powerful argument, and I saw in the faces of the twelve men that it had told.

There was but one point left for me to make, and I wondered that my distinguished brethren had passed it by. They had dwelt upon the youth and good standing of the prisoner, and the uncalled-for persecution he had suffered. They pictured in graphic words the midnight attempt upon his life at his own house. A man's house is his castle, and he has the supreme right to defend both it and himself. They appealed to the sympathies of the jurors in behalf of the young, helpless wife and innocent child. Still there was wanting the one link in the chain of positive evidence. Sympathy was well enough. The twelve sworn men required proof. How was it to be shown them?

I was young, and I felt all the nervousness attendant upon a maiden effort, but my heart was in the work and I launched forth. Nature had given me a good voice, and I felt a certain power as I spoke. But I had not the egotism to suppose that I could compete with the learned gentlemen who had preceded me unless I could make a decided hit in summing up the testimony. This I did. When I came to the hitherto unnoticed dog, I dwelt there with a tenacity that was determined to convince. I portrayed the well-known fidelity of the dog. No matter what the master, whether fortune's pampered darling, or a beastly denizen of the gutter, his dog was always his friend. Be he kind and gentle, or cruel and pitiless, still his dog crouches in loving submission. And the animal, whether a high-bred, glossy-coated favorite, with golden collar and silken leash, for whom hundreds had been paid, or an ill-favored, ungainly brute picked up from nowhere and as thankful for a kick as for a crust, was loyal with a fidelity that puts to shame man's boasted friendship.

This man's dog had loved him. Drunk or sober, kind or cruel, his dog was not content out of his presence. Why was he not with the man on this fatal night? Because Belt had chained him in order to follow out his vengeance untraced. The master knew the sagacity of his dog. He wanted no companion on his midnight stroll. And when, restless and uneasy, the dog was let loose and shown the garment of his master, what did he do? He dashed away, nose to earth, in eager, loving pursuit, along the road to Grant's cottage. There he sniffs the ground, where undoubtedly the familiar scent lay, jumps upon the window-ledge with his fore paws, whimpers, starts away, and follows the trail down the path to the beloved body now cold in death.



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What proof more convincing than that Belt had been there? How improbable the trumped-up story that Grant could decoy from his home his bitterest enemy, especially at the midnight hour! A loaded pistol and a chisel were found under the window. It had been alleged that Grant placed them there for his own base purposes. But admitting that man could deceive, the dog would not. Canine instinct could not lie. Every man who knew the nature of the animal must feel convinced that Belt's dog would never have gone to that window except in honest pursuit of his master.

I felt that my speech had told, and as I sat down there was a stir in the vast crowd. My client's face was flushed, and the wife's somber veil was thrown back, revealing her large eyes lustrous with hope.

The Commonwealth's attorney occupied the floor for an hour, during which he ridiculed what he termed the schoolboy tales from his youthful opponent. But when the jury retired I felt that my influence was still uppermost. The suspense was trying, but it did not last long. They reported in a very short time, and the verdict, announced in a clear ringing voice, was "Not guilty!"

Grant sprang forward as his friends pressed near and seized my hand in a vise-like grip. Loud cheers rent the air, for again the fickle public had veered around, the crowd surged to and fro, women wept, and the fervent "Thank God!" that broke from the pallid lips of the young wife rang in my ears for many a day.

The foreman of the jury, a plain, intelligent farmer, drew me aside and said, "That dog done the business! There was no gittin' around that! I've got a dog myself."

Grant was forced to begin life anew, for his counsels' fees about consumed his little savings, but he remained at his post honest and industrious, and is one of the leading men in the now populous section.

Three Visits

A ROMANTIC SKETCH

The day was warm and sunny. A few industrious and enterprising pioneers were seated on a log near the Wallace Cross Roads, in what is now Garrard county, Ky. They were enjoying their noonday luncheon and discussing the object of their woodland caucus. Suddenly the sound of an advancing horse arrested their attention. Pausing and looking toward a primitive opening in the deep-tangled wildwood, they soon saw both horse and rider approaching, the latter looking about him as if a stranger to the country. He was among them in another moment, receiving their rough but hearty greetings, and manifesting genuine pleasure in his frank, youthful countenance. Though not yet attained to full manhood, the traveller's figure was tall and graceful, and his face, by no



means handsome, wore a genial glow that intensified the wonderful magnetism of his manner.

“You seem to be a stranger in these parts,” said one of the men, mopping his forehead with his red bandana.



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“Yes,” answered the traveller. “I am a few days out from home across the mountains yonder. Can you direct me to Lexington?”

“Easy, easy, sir,” said the other, “It’s a good spell from this, but there’s a pretty fair road after you get out of these thickets. Sit down, sir; sit down and have a snack with us. You must be hungry, and you won’t find a tavern soon.”

Nothing loth, the young stranger addressed himself to the cold corn bread and bacon with a will, while the talk veered around to the business of the day.

“You, see, sir, we are about to build a courthouse hereabouts, and have our lawing to ourselves,” said the first speaker. “We’ve about decided to plant the corner stone at the Cross Roads a little way from this.”

“It’s a first rate location,” said another. “There’s good water all around and plenty of trees for lumber.”

“Nothing like making the right start,” added a third voice.

They continued to discuss plans for their future township, the stranger entering with courteous interest into all their projects.

“I have often tried,” said he, “to look into the future of this grand section of country. To the day when the spirit of internal improvement shall have levelled the roads and converted the hidden wealth of the soil into a glorious medium of happiness and prosperity. Then the mental stores of our hardy settlers will rapidly develop, and civilization will prune down the rugged points of character, as the implements of the husbandman break up the clods.”

Rapt visions illumined the young speaker’s features with a glow of national pride, and he saw not the looks of intelligent curiosity that passed among his companions.

Then starting up, he said, “I must really be going. I have a long ride, and the day is waning. I thank you heartily for your hospitality. I assure you it is as refreshing as it was unexpected.”

They shook hands, and the stranger mounted his horse which was quietly grazing near by. Catching up the bridle, he said: “One of these days I hope to visit your section again, and see the great results of which you are now making the small beginning. Farewell.”

“One moment,” said the man who had first greeted him; “might I ask your name, if it’s not going too far?”

“Not at all, sir, not at all. My name is Henry Clay.”



For a few minutes after the departure of the young stranger, the small knot of pioneers commented with admiring wonder upon his singularly fascinating address, and saying, "That man will make his mark in the world," they proceeded to refresh themselves at a cool spring, and then prepared to finish the survey.

* * * * *

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Years after, the little town of Lancaster, which had grown from the humble courthouse of the Cross Roads, was in a state of excitement such as only villages are liable to experience. It was the occasion of a school examination, and the citizens were all more or less interested. At the appointed hour the house was full, and the classes were marshalled in due order to the front. Four o'clock struck, and the programme was drawing to a close, when one of the dignitaries of the town entered the hall, accompanied by a tall, distinguished-looking stranger, whose presence inspired the children with a certain sense of awe. It was at once whispered about that the great statesman, Henry Clay, was among them. Upon presenting him to the teacher, the school rose, and chairs being provided, the exercises went on. When the time came for making recitations, the young people exhibited marked signs of embarrassment; but one by one they acquitted themselves creditably. At length a little blue-eyed, sunny-haired child ascended the platform and recited "The Old Oaken Bucket," with wonderful pathos, so accurate was her enunciation, so impressive the varying cadences of her sweet voice.

"Who is she?" I inquired the great man when the storm of applause had somewhat subsided.

"We call her 'Daisy of the Glen,'" was the reply. "She is a prodigy for her age. Her history is a little singular. She was found not far from here in a wild glen, or ravine, when about three years old, and has never been able to tell who or where her parents are. But I will relate the circumstances to you at another time. At present the trustees are pressing in their invitation to you to say something to the children."

Whereupon the grandest orator of his day arose and addressed a few remarks in simple language to his youthful audience. He told them of the day, when on the highway from Virginia into the Blue Grass region, he rode into their woodland council on the rugged spot where their pretty little village now stood. And as their forefathers had cultivated the then dense wilderness, so he admonished them to study and improve their minds in school. Great men and noted women had already sprung into fame from their young city, and many a glorious achievement of word, of pen, and of sword, had given renown to the place whose birth he had incidentally witnessed in the long ago.

When he ceased speaking he had implanted the germ of honest ambition in the hearts of many of the little men and women whose future influence was to wield power for good or ill. That night, seated among friends in the best room the little tavern afforded, Henry Clay learned further particulars concerning wee, winsome Daisy of the Glen, whose appearance and address had so charmed his fancy. She was evidently a stolen child. Her dress, when she was discovered by a hunter, was fine, and her whole appearance indicative of an easy sphere of life. It was supposed that



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a band of gypsies had decoyed her away while carelessly straying too far from her home, but nothing definite was known. Mrs. Templeton, a kind, motherly woman, without children, had cheerfully given the little stranger shelter, and had in time grown so fond of her that she could not bear the thought of parting. Hence, after the first unsuccessful effort, no further attempt had been made to discover the parentage of the little waif. She called herself Daisy, in her lisping fashion, and her lovely disposition had won for her the poetical title of "Daisy of the Glen."

Mr. Clay listened earnestly, and when about to leave, he deposited a sum of money for the benefit of the little girl's education.

* * * * *

Ten years after, two figures sat in earnest conversation on the verdant cliff of a romantic ravine leading from the banks of Dix river. The one, a young girl of remarkably fair exterior, turned in an animated manner to impress some assertion upon her companion. The other, a youth so exceedingly handsome in face and figure, so lithe of person and eloquent of speech, that no girl of eighteen could long resist his attractions.

"Indeed, Roye, I knew it must be he and no other. He made an impression upon my memory when a little child of eight years, that can never be effaced. Who else would be so likely to interest himself in my fate?"

"Indeed, Daisy," he echoed, "who is disposed to doubt the truth of your surmises? You are probably correct, yet on the other hand, what proof have you that Mr. Clay is your unknown benefactor?"

"None at all except the fact that he honored me so far on that memorable visit to the school, as to inquire all about me. More than that he came to the house and asked me a number of questions about my infancy. Without his help I could never have gone away to complete my education or possessed any accomplishments. Poor mamma always thought the money came from him, and almost her last injunction to me, was to hold him in profound veneration as long as I live."

"And it was here they found my little wanderer," fondly exclaimed Roye Howard. "I should never, probably, have known true happiness but for the vagabond who stole my Daisy!"

The girl's face clouded for a moment.

"Are you willing, Roye, to take me with this mystery hanging over me? If there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed, how do we know at what moment some revelation may come upon us that will dash our hopes to the earth?"



“Never, never!” impetuously replied the youth. “Nature cannot so belie herself as to make a blot or stain possible to her fairest creation.”

Blushing beneath his admiring gaze, and thrilling with pleasure at his words, Daisy proceeded to repeat all that she had ever remembered of her home and parents. A large house, a doll as big as herself, and a tender face bending above her, comprised her store of reminiscences. Since the death of her foster mother she had remained with friends, and was soon to be united in marriage to Roye Howard, a rising young lawyer, reared in Lexington, and established at Lancaster only a few months.



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Talking confidently of their promised happiness, the pair lingered among the sylvan shades of the romantic spot till the waning sunlight bent their steps homeward.

Next day was the regular County Court day in the village. The public square was crowded with vehicles, live stock, and countrymen whose chief pleasure was to mix in motley crowds, and to whose fancy an uproar of some kind was ever welcome. On such occasions, in the somewhat lax administering of justice of those early times, the killing of a fellow creature seemed indeed a trifle light as air.

At a conspicuous corner of Danville street stood the house where Daisy Templeton had found a temporary home. A number of ladies, wives of the Judge and various lawyers, had assembled here to dine, a custom prevalent upon public occasions. The group were deeply engrossed in needle-work and cheerful conversation, when suddenly the crowds on the square began surging and clamoring as though the turbulence of an angry sea had been turned loose upon a peaceful plain, Shouts rose higher and higher, till at last a pistol shot resounded, and the ladies that had crowded to the front windows plainly distinguished the cry, "The Judge is killed! Jim Burns has shot Judge Pierce!" and the mob rushed toward the mouth of Danville street in pursuit of the desperado, a noted character of the county.

Quickly passing out the back door of the parlor and closing it behind her, Daisy reached the side door, opening on Danville street and heavily shaded with trees, and flung the door to just as a man, pale and terrified, darted in, almost throwing her to the floor.

"Save me!" was all he had breath to ejaculate.

"Up there!" she hurriedly exclaimed, pointing up the stairway toward the attic; then slamming the door against the mob who were pressing upon the steps, she turned the key in the lock and stood, awaiting she knew not what. All this was the work of a moment, while the ladies in the parlor were too intent upon watching the square for a glimpse of the Judge to know that so important a scene was being enacted just behind them. Mrs. Pierce had run down the front steps inquiring of every one if the report was true.

Meanwhile, as Daisy stood silent and alone in the little passage, her heart throbbing fast, the crowd outside beat upon the door and clamored for Jim Burns. At this moment Stanley Livingstone, the young man of the house, appeared from a bed-room in the rear where he had been administering a dose of sleep to a severe headache, and asked with more emphasis than grace.

"What the devil's broke loose?"

She dared not tell him the truth.



“Oh, Stanley,” exclaimed she, much relieved, “they are after Jim Burns. They think he is here and are determined to force their way in. They say he has killed Judge Pierce!”

“Let me settle them,” said Stanley, and throwing wide the door, he assured them that Burns was not there—that he would certainly have seen the man if he had entered the house.



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Incredulous, but irresistibly impressed by his earnest words, they retired to the opposite side of the street to watch for their prey, who, they convinced themselves, had darted through the house and concealed himself about the premises too quickly to be detected by the inmates. That the fugitive had disappeared at that side door, some of them knew beyond question.

As Stanley stepped out to learn exactly what the excitement meant, Daisy again turned the key, and observing a stain of blood on her white dress, she dared not re-enter the parlor with the tell-tale sign.

Hurrying up the stairs, she filled a basin with water, and with a roll of linen, proceeded quickly to the attic, where the man stood, leaning against a packing-box, tightly clasping his hand.

“You are wounded somewhere?” she asked.

“Yes, in the hand,” he faintly answered. “He shot me.”

“Who?” asked the girl.

“The Judge,” sullenly said Burns.

“Then you didn’t kill him?”

“Kill him! I wish I had!”

Going to a back window, Daisy signed to a servant to come up, but when there, the frightened creature refused to touch the bloody hand. So Daisy proceeded to bathe and dress the lacerated flesh, all the while talking kindly and warningly to the man, who stared at the lovely vision with something like shame in his face.

As she started to leave him, a stone sped its way swiftly through the window and fell at her feet.

“You see,” said she, “your life is not safe a moment where you are. They believe that you are here. Some one saw you enter the door. Remain perfectly quiet till nightfall and then go home a wiser and a better man.”

“God bless you, miss!” said the man brokenly. “I have been very wicked all my life. I have wronged many, and you more than all; but if my life is spared, I’ll make some things right.”

Wondering at his words, Daisy left him and rejoined her friends, after the brief absence which was destined to bear rich fruits to her orphaned heart.



That night, under cover of the darkness, the man went away. But at ten o'clock, in defiance of prudence, he came back, knocked boldly, and asked to see Miss Templeton—he had a package for her. She came, and placing something in her hand, abruptly left, mounted his horse, and rode away in a fierce gallop, ere she could speak, and again Daisy closed the door upon this thread of her romantic destiny.

On opening the package she found a coral necklace and armlets, with clasps engraved, and a soiled, miserably-scrawled letter. The initials on the jewels were R.M. The letter told her that he, the desperate and outlawed writer, had been leagued with a band of reckless men some years ago, and had stolen her away from her beautiful home in Louisville, thinking to obtain a heavy ransom. While passing through Garrard county, he, the man to whose care the gang had confided her, because he



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was sort o' womanish, they said, had lagged behind intent upon a bottle of whisky, and when he recovered his senses, the child was gone. Fearing that she had met her death, and knowing nothing then of the picnic party that had rescued her, he fled the country for some years, and after his return he had never had courage to confess his crime. Her parents were wealthy, and their name was Mentelle. He could tell her nothing of their present whereabouts.

* * * * *

New Year's Eve comes in cold, and a deep snow envelops the earth. A wedding party at the corner house on Danville street is the event of the evening. Roye Howard and Daisy Mentelle have just taken their marriage vows, and the house is crowded with guests. Just before supper a new arrival startles and astonishes the brilliant company. Henry Clay, grown grey with years and honors, is among them, never having lost sight of his protege. After congratulating the pair and kissing the bride, he bade her come with him to another apartment; and when she had wonderingly obeyed, he proudly presented to her a handsome lady richly dressed in mourning.

"This, my dear, is your mother. I have not rested till I found her."

"It is she—it is she, indeed," exclaimed the noble-looking woman—"my own little Ray—my Daisy!" and the mother clasped her newfound darling to her breast in a passion of thankfulness and joy.

"This is my bridal present, my dear," said the statesman, after much had been told, and Roye admitted to the circle.

"Since your letter of inquiry to me, my search has been constant. Your father is no more, but this boon is the greatest of all. Receive her with my blessing. Three times have I passed through your town. Always has it held a warm place in my heart. May every succeeding twelve months bring to you as happy a New Year!"

An Easter Dawn

"AND THERE WAS LIGHT"

"Are you inflexible, Doris? Can nothing alter your decision?"

"Spare us both further pain, Warner. I cannot leave my blind mother. It is useless to ask it."

"And do I ask it? You can still care for your mother. I do not ask you to leave her."



The girl shook her head sadly.

“As a wife I must go with my husband. In the conflict of duties the mother must yield. No, no, it would be cruel.”

“Even admitting this, is there not a way out of it? Will she not try to have her sight restored? Once relieved she might depend upon others, and be content without you. Then you could come to me.”

“I dare not urge this. Think what she endured before—the operation, the mismanagement, the suffering, and the final loss of the eye itself. Oh, Warner, the recollection of that terrible time makes me shudder. I pray that she may forget it. I dare not urge another trial. Spare me that.”



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There was silence in the room, broken only by the ticking of the little mantle clock, till in a low suppressed voice she continued:

“And you know the awful blow that came so soon after, that has broken her down. She clings to me in so many ways. No, Warner, she might yield to my persuasions, but I should never forgive myself if things went wrong.”

“Wrong?” echoed the man, bitter pain tugging at his heart. “How much more wrong could things go? But it is nothing to you that my life is made desolate, that loving you through all its best years I must quietly give you up, and that, too, when I am in condition to take care of you. Have I shown no consideration by waiting? Have I ever pressed my claim till I knew I could make you comfortable and happy? But why do I cringe and beg like this?” he added, setting his teeth hard with the pain of disappointment. “If you really loved me you could not quibble about the thing you call duty.” And he strode back and forth, refusing to take in the situation.

Then the girl’s forced composure gave way. This was not her first tilt with the man she loved, but he had never been so hard, so desperate, so unjust. Heroically she had tried to do her duty. Ignominously she now felt herself faltering in the way.

He could not bear her tears. The sight of her grief drove him from himself. Pausing before her, he said:

“Doris, I yield. Let it be as you say.”

And he lifted her hand to his lips in adieu; though in his powerfully imposed self-restraint he could not be all tenderness. His tones were gentle, and in the look he cast upon her bowed figure there was no reproach.

He was gone; and Doris went back to the mother who was unconscious that she was wrecking the happiness of this devoted child; the only one left to her. One by one they had married and gone, and now in her darkened world she was enduring a more fearful weight of woe than blindness. Ralph, her youngest, and her darling, the Benjamin of her old age, had fled the country under the awful ban of murder. His employer, a hard man, had been found dead in his private office from a blow on the back of the head. Suspicion pointed to Ralph, who, poor, hot-headed fellow, had been heard to vow vengeance against the dead man for his harshness. A fellow clerk warned him in time to flee from the officers of the law. He could not go without seeing his mother. In the silence of the night he had clasped her trembling form in his stalwart young arms, and in broken, quivering tones, bade her trust in his innocence. “Mother, believe me, only believe me; I did not do it,” and sped on in the darkness, an exile. She did believe in him. She would almost as soon have doubted her Savior’s love. But her stern, unbending pride of race was wounded. Her loving heart was pierced in its tenderest

spot, and in a few short weeks she was a fretful, peevish invalid, making wholesale but unconscious draughts upon her noble daughter's patience.



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Five years had gone by since these household fetters had been forged for Doris. Young and lovely, she adorned every circle. Offers of marriage were unheeded, and her heart was untouched till Warner Douglas, the young physician, came. They had met when she was a school girl and he a student in the same town; and now it was revealed to her why he had chosen her place of residence as the starting point in his career. So they had loved and hoped on only to be crushed at last.

The day after her final rejection of his suit, the post brought a note that ran thus:

“Doris, good-bye; not for a day, or a week, but as long as may require to perfect my plans. I have spent a sleepless night, and this is my conclusion. There is one way out of this. Maddening as is your decision, I am forced to yield. But I shall not give you up without a struggle. I have determined to study the human eye as a specialty. The savings I had meant to devote to our united lives shall go to this end. If I do not write often and in lover-like fashion, it will be because I must be firm in my undertaking. When I have mastered the science, I hope to come back to you with healing in my hand for the mother for whose infirmities you sacrifice me. Do not think me bitter; I am trying to be kind. In any case, be my probation long or short, I shall be

“Ever yours,

“WARNER DOUGLAS.”

Long Doris wept heart-breaking tears over this letter. Had she decided aright? She mused far into the night, and at last her tired spirit found comfort in the hope that her lover might one day unlock the prison doors of both her mother and herself. Next day and for many days she went about her duties mechanically, but her blind mother missed nothing, knew nothing. Wearisome vigils were those! Not for a moment could she trust her charge alone. With the perverseness of age she would try to grope her way about, and more than once had she wandered into danger. Besides this active, bodily vigilance, there were papers and books to read to her, and the post-office was fairly haunted by fruitless messages for tidings of the wandering boy. “How long, O Lord, how long?” was the burden of the mother’s heart, and upon Doris fell the hopeless task of comforting.

Two years dragged their slow lengths. Time and sorrow made little change in Doris Hadyn. The fair, round cheeks had lost none of their bloom, for duty well performed brings its own reward. She was the moving spirit in all good works, and several of her young friends had gradually come to share her time in amusing and interesting her invalid mother.

Her lover’s departure, leaving his patients to a brother physician, had been a nine-days’ wonder, but now all were rejoicing in his success at the city hospitals. Several wonderful operations had made a great noise, and he awoke one morning to find

himself famous. No more anxious care for the savings he had intended for himself and his bride. They were returning upon him tenfold. At last he wrote to Doris:



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“Are you waiting for me? I am coming, not for an hour, or for a day, but to cast my lot once more near you. But first I shall come as the physician, since till that mission is ended, I am forbidden to come as a lover.

“WARNER.”

Not even the reproach in this laconic letter could tinge her joy. He was coming; that was uppermost. He came, and Doris met him as she had parted—loving and faithful; so proud of him, too, but unalterable in her duty as before. She found his whole nature widened and broadened, just as in appearance he was more manly. He was then a clever practitioner: he was now the renowned oculist. From the first day his office swarmed with patients. Old, chronic cases seemed to spring up everywhere, and he found himself in a fair way of being taxed beyond the limit.

Gently he began his ministrations to the mother of his beloved. When he had won her confidence, he felt that the battle was half fought. She soon expressed a willingness to submit to anything, to undergo any pain, if only her sight might be restored. This he could not promise, but his experienced eye could detect nothing worse than a cataract obstructing the vision, and he convinced her that it was worth the trial.

One mild winter day she was taken to his office now fitted up with all the belongings of his service. With bated breath he adjusted his instrument. Heavy portieres shut out the daylight. Steadily the electric ray was thrown into the darkened eye. Shrinking with a thousand fears, and tortured with suspense, Doris sank upon a sofa. In silence he applied his tests. She could hear the beatings of her heart. Softly he questioned his patient, who hung upon his words for her life sentence.

At last, laying a hand almost caressingly upon each shoulder, he said:

“My dear Mrs. Hadyn, I think I can give you sight.”

An involuntary cry broke from her lips, and Doris burst into convulsive tears. Then relaxing the tension of these many weary years, the bearer of good tidings folded his arms about the slight form for a moment as he led her to her mother. Not yet, even, would he give full rein to his hopes. He might fail. There was inflammation lurking behind the eye-ball, caused by contagion from its fellow, which, when carelessly bandaged too closely, had burst from its socket, irretrievably lost. He could but try; and now his humanity as well as his love nerved him to the task.

A preliminary course of treatment was ordered, and the Lenten season was nearly over when the eye was declared ready for the knife. The day was appointed, and the patient's own room was selected as the place. The night before, the doctor came in all worn and tired out from a hurried call to a neighboring city hospital. Doris knew his step and met him at the door.

“Come with me, Doris, into the library,” he said.

Nervous with undefined apprehension, she followed him.



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“Can you bear good news?” he asked, bending upon her eyes which held for her the light of loving sympathy. “Will you be as brave as you have been all these years? I was called away yesterday——”

“Ralph!” she gasped, catching his arm in the excitement of hope.

“Yes—Ralph,” he said, placing his arm about her; “he is cleared at last. The man I was called to see was James Green, Ralph’s fellow-clerk. He was run down by a heavy furniture van and badly crushed. I could not save him, but he knew me, and gave me this paper, which is a confession of his guilt. It completely exonerates your brother.”

“Thank God!” she fervently exclaimed, clasping the paper to her heart.

“Shall we tell Mrs. Haydn?” he asked, still gravely supporting her.

“By all means,” was her happy answer through shining tears; “now—this moment,” leading him away. “Joy does not kill.”

It did not kill; it only braced the grateful sufferer for the ordeal set for the next day.

“Find my boy as soon as you can and bring him to me,” was her prayer; and with a sense of comfort long a stranger, the mother slept peacefully on this, her last night perhaps, of blindness.

The next day she was made ready for her couch, where she was to lie in perfect quiet after the operation. At two o’clock, Dr. Douglas, with two young assistants, entered easily and cheerfully upon his task.

“Are you strong enough to witness it?” he asked in a low voice, as Doris took her stand.

She bowed her head, and the work began. It was neither long nor difficult. A little cocaine in the eye, a quick, perpendicular incision, the deft scooping from the orifice of a hard, pearly ball like an opal setting, a cleansing of film by one skillful sweep, and all was over.

“Close the eye for a moment,” was his order, as in complete silence the trio hung upon the result.

“Now open it and look.”

As the lids parted, he held his hand before them, moving his fingers in quick succession.

“What is it?” she asked.



“Well,” he spoke playfully, as to a child; “what is it? I want you to tell me. Do you see anything?”

“Yes, I see—a hand, but—it looks blue.”

At this the surgeon clasped his hands in thanksgiving, and exclaimed: “Victory! If you did not see the blue coloring at first, madam, I should be in despair.”

Yes, victory was his, for his skill and for his love. He continued his tests, first by resting the eye, then by bringing objects within the range of vision. At last he gently led Doris in full view.

“It is Doris, my faithful, patient child, whose dear face I have not seen for so long,” she said with emotion that threatened tears, but this the doctor forbade, and proceeded at once to carefully seal the patient’s eyelids.

“Keep the room light, and watch her day and night. She must not touch the eye even in sleep,” was his parting injunction.



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"But, doctor, don't you bandage the eye? And my room was kept dark after the other operation was performed."

"No, madam, the room must be light, and I do not bandage the eye."

The days went by, each new one revealing some half-forgotten picture to the patient. She already loved Dr. Douglas as a son, and her bodily infirmities, real or fancied, were fast vanishing away. Ralph had been found, and a telegram said he was coming. Easter eve was here, and as the doctor took leave his grateful patient bade him good-night with unusual feeling,

"Through you," she said, "I am made to realize the precious promise, 'At evening time it shall be light.' Think what this anniversary must be to me! The morning will celebrate the resurrection of Him who was the Light of the world. Light, light, everywhere! How can I be thankful enough!"

"To-morrow I will set you free, my dear madam, and if you feel that I have done you a service, perhaps I may show you how to repay me." And with a warm pressure of her hand, and an unspoken good-night to Doris, he went away.

At the dawn of the morning Doris stood beside her mother when she awoke, and said lightly: "Whom do you want to see besides your grumpy old Doris, this bright morning?"

"Is he here? Ralph—my boy—has he come?" And his fond arms enwrapped her in joy too deep for words. She could not look at him enough—her bronzed and bearded baby boy.

Later on the doctor called, but he did not at once interrupt the mother and son. When at last he walked into the cheerful family room it was with Doris by his side.

"My dear Mrs. Hadyn," he began, "do you want to make me as grateful as you say you are? If so, only look!"

With the uncertain timidity she had not yet learned to overcome, she directed her once sightless eyes toward him. He stood with Doris clasped in his arms. The mother had not heeded his words of the previous evening, for they bore no hidden meaning to her. A light now broke over her features, while Ralph smilingly watched her.

"Doris, my child, how long have you loved this man?" were the only words she found to say.

"So long, mother, that I shall not try to remember."



In the Mammoth Cave

WHERE THERE'S A WILL THERE'S A WAY

NOTE—This story is built upon a legend of Mammoth Cave.

The open mouth of Kentucky's far-famed cavern yawned huge and black. On the brow of the hill, ready to descend the winding rock stairway, stood a group of young people picturesquely attired in the bloomer costume of cave-explorers. They were disputing as to whether to take the long or short route first, unmindful of the guide, who ventured to hint that time was slipping away.

"If we take the long route first we will be too tired for the short one," said one.

"Oh, that will never do!" exclaimed another, "I must see the Chapel and the Star Chamber. That is about all I came for."



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Apart from the wranglers a pair stood in earnest conversation, hardly in keeping with the frivolity of the hour.

She was small, lovely, and winning in gypsy dress of red and black, relieved here and there with soft white ruffles. Upon her golden curls rested a dainty little padded cap, and strong boots protected the tender feet. From her gloved fingers swung a torch not yet lighted.

The youth beside her showed his hardy pioneer lineage in a well-knit frame and a countenance full of chivalry, and at present glowing with eloquent love for his fair companion.

Neither of the absorbed pair noticed the angry light in the cruel eyes of a man standing near the guide. He was fully thirty-five years of age, quite tall, and as a merry girl expressed it, brigandish-looking. But for the restless passions that marred his bearded face he might have been called handsome. He glared at Minnie Dare as a tiger might watch his prey, for she was indeed the destined prey of this fierce-looking man.

By what mysterious power Jason Hammond had won the gentle girl from her devoted father no one knew, but with haggard face and heart-wrung pain, Colonel Dare had bidden his one ewe lamb prepare for the sacrifice.

This long-planned excursion was to be the last of freedom for Minnie Dare.

Striding up to the unconscious lovers, the man said rudely,—

“Miss Dare, do you mean to hang about here all day? They are waiting for you.”

“I presume, sir, Miss Dare has the right to stay where she pleases,” retorted Eldon Brand, a quick, angry flash leaping to his eyes.

“Hardly,” returned the other superciliously, “at all events she knows better, whatever your view of the matter.”

With a look of appeal from her blue eyes that arrested the sharp rejoinder from the lips of the man she loved, the girl turned away, her face suddenly paling from fear.

“Here comes the pirate chief with his captive,” exclaimed a laughing girl.

“Hush, Cornelia; he may hear you—horrid man! He wouldn’t be here if he wasn’t so rich.”

“Why, where is Eldon Brand?” said another.

“Over there, cutting a staff from the cane-brake,” replied the first speaker.



“Ladies and gentlemen,” here interposed the guide, striking a stage attitude, “if you want my services you must come right along. It is already too late for the long route; you will have to take the short one.”

“All right,” agreed the party, rallying their forces, “we’ll take the short one, then. Forward, march!”

Down, down they went in pairs along the circuitous stairway to the entrance, where the thick darkness might be felt. With lighted torches they turned from the sunshine and entered upon the pioneer wagon tracks imbedded in the soil for two miles. Hither the early settlers were wont to convey their salt barrels and other stores for safe keeping from the natives.



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Laughing, talking, jesting, the merry party went in.

“Jerusalem! What’s that?” ejaculated a young fellow, with more vigor than polish, as he fought right and left an unknown foe.

“That? Oh, that’s only bats flying around. They don’t stay in much further. They’ll hit you in the face if you don’t look out,” explained the guide.

“Yes, I think they will,” said the victim, still spluttering and flourishing his handkerchief. “A little more of that sort of thing and I’ll turn back now.”

They soon reached the avenue that leads to the Side Saddle, where more than one merry lass took a seat for effect. They heard how an explorer named Goren had once stood idly talking and pecking against the wall with a sharp stone when, lo! it broke through. He continued to widen the opening till, upon throwing down a blue light, there stood revealed a perfect dome, exquisitely filagreeed. It has been known ever since as Goren’s Dome, and a good-sized window, jagging the wall, admits one or two lookers at a time. On their knees they crawled through the Valley of Humility, and out into almost endless space, so varied are the landmarks of this underground miracle. Here is a chamber too vast to be lighted by the torches; there, a defile so narrow as to be passed only in single file. Now they traverse a level valley to emerge at the foot of a mountainous region that must be attacked with alpenstocks and helping hands.

“Oh, look at that awfully dark place! It might be Pluto’s hallway,” said a girl.

“Don’t go that way,” called the guide; “you must just follow me. There is where that stranger strayed off and was never heard of again. He was in bad health and came in here to breathe the pure air for a few hours. He never came out.”

“Goodness!” thundered a dozen voices; “let’s move on before his ghost appears. I hear the rattle of dry bones now.”

“The Star Chamber!” shouted the guide, who, being in front, had often much ado to send his voice to the rear of the party. “Ladies and gentlemen, walk in, take your seats, and let me have your torches.”

He was obeyed with much fluttering and chattering. He extinguished all the lights but his own, and disappeared behind a ledge of shelving rock. They were in total darkness. Gradually a ray of blue, then of red, then of white light, flashed upon the vast concave roof, showing myriads of star-like points resembling the Milky Way, a crescent moon, and finally a comet appearing in full sail. The effect was magical.

“It is usual to have a song here, if you would like it,” suggested the guide.

“By all means,” was the universal response. “A chorus! a chorus!”



Then the voices swelled upon the air in a thousand reverberating echoes. At the close the guide reappeared and lit the torches. Once more they sallied forth.

“Where is Minnie Dare?” suddenly asked a tall girl, whose tongue was too voluble for the guide’s equanimity.



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“Here!” sounded the stentorian voice of Jason Hammond.

Upon turning back, however, he found not Minnie, but another small maiden near him. He darted again into the Star Chamber just as the fleet steps of Minnie Dare ran toward him. Not, however, in time to prevent his discerning among the shadows Eldon Brand hurrying to her side.

Catching the girl’s tender arm in a vise-like grip, the man hissed in her ear,—

“By Heaven, my girl, if you don’t stop philandering in the dark with that young scoundrel, I’ll pitch him into the first pit I see! You belong to me, and I’ll kill you before another shall have you!”

With a cry of mingled pain and terror the girl broke from him. Eldon Brand, who had seen the gesture without hearing the words, sprung with uplifted arm toward the man. Ere he could strike he was seized from behind by strong arms, and a voice urged,—

“Don’t, Brand! For Heaven’s sake, let that ruffian alone till we get out of this. You will frighten the ladies, get yourself into the newspapers, and play the deuce generally. Come on—they are calling in front.”

Hammond had seen this little by-play, and would not soon forget it; but at present he strode on after the girl.

“Why don’t you fellows keep up?” grumbled a voice as the delinquents entered the Chapel.

“Did anybody fall? I thought I heard a cry back there,” said the tall young lady peering suspiciously into the group; but all seemed serene in the fitful torchlight.

In the Chapel huge stalactites and stalagmites meet each other to form arm-chairs, thrones, alcoves, pulpits, and a double niche conspicuous among its surroundings. Standing within this niche a restless pair exclaimed:

“What a capital place to be married! Who will pronounce the ceremony?”

“Bless you, my children!” invoked a sober-looking fellow, extending his arms in mock solemnity.

An earnest, significant look flashed from Eldon Brand’s eyes into the still blanched face of Minnie Dare. As they met the glance it bore but one meaning to her, and the rosy color again mantled her cheek.

“Time’s up,” said the guide; “come along.”



It was late ere the party completed the tour of the Short Route wonders, and there was barely time to dress for the ball-room at Cave Hotel, a dance being an attractive interlude between journeyings.

Indoor etiquette forbade the hateful espionage to which Hammond had subjected the girl he claimed as his own during the informal jaunt of the day. So at ten o'clock, despite the scowl on his dark face, she stood up in the dance with Eldon Brand.

Perhaps her persecutor might have attuned his wooing to something less ferocious, but soft words having proved futile, he sought to frighten her into compliance. Love's dallying might come later on. He deemed his prize secure. She could not escape him. He held her father's honor—aye, his very life—in his relentless grasp; for Colonel Dare was not a man who could survive disgrace. Let her rebel, and the world should hear an ugly story of rash speculation, involving a ward's trust money; of financial ruin and despair. Oh, yes—she was his, fast and sure.

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It required all her persuasive power to withhold her lover from a personal attack upon her betrothed husband.

“It can do no good, Eldon,” she urged; “my father has promised my hand to this man. He is somehow in his power. There seems no escape. Oh, that I might die and be free! It is like a horrible nightmare.”

Then his words came in passionate pleading. Eloquently the tones fell upon her ears. At length the hopeless apathy in her eyes gave place to interest, then animation, and finally to a degree of agitation but ill-concealed from the suspicious watcher. They were standing on a low balcony just outside the ballroom.

“Will you, dearest? Will you be brave for my sake—for our sakes?” were Eldon’s parting words.

“I will try,” she murmured softly, as with a fond pressure of the hand he resigned her to a new partner.

Early next morning Eldon Brand might have been seen returning from a little wayside shop with a bundle, whose contents—a ball of heavy twine, a can of oil, and a box of matches—would have surprised his fellow tourists. He conversed earnestly for some minutes with Stephen, the favorite guide of Mammoth Cave, to whom he also conveyed some bank notes; and at eight o’clock he joined the party en route for the nine-mile tramp into the cave. For two miles the way was the same as that of the short route, bats and all. Then came the immense hall where rude plank seats still attest the worship of pioneer settlers in the land of Indians and wild beasts. Here they sat and sang hymns, while countless echoes repeated the sounds.

They paused in the Ball Room; squeezed through Fat Man’s Misery, that zig-zag passage so narrow and winding that the one behind cannot see his neighbor a yard ahead; and then out into the ample comfort of Great Relief. Merrily they filled the little boats and sailed down Echo River, where abound the eyeless fish; crossed Lake Lethe, where all care is said to be left behind; passed the huge Granite Coffin; stood wondering before the Great Eastern; shuddered beside the Dead Sea and the Bottomless Pit; climbed Martha’s Vineyard, where huge bunches of grapes in stone looked as natural as life; took lunch in Washington Hall; revelled in the snow-white crystals of Siliman’s Avenue; crossed the Rocky Mountains to Traveller’s Rest, and there wrote their names upon the extreme wall, that perpetual register of hundreds of sightseers.

Here some moments were given to recapitulating the marvels of the long route; the rivers, lakes, hills, ravines and valleys; and above all, another black, yawning chasm similar to that which had startled them on the short route.



“Stephen, where does that lead?” was the query.

“That leads into the one we saw yesterday. We call this end Beersheba, and the other Dan, because it is so much nearer the mouth of the cave. I have explored the whole passage, but it has nothing worth showing visitors. But I have no doubt there’s miles that nobody has ever been over. It’s a big place, I tell you.”



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“Didn’t you find the dead stranger?” asked the tall girl, who always had something to say.

“Can’t say as I looked for him, miss.”

In high spirits the party retraced their steps as far as the Bottomless Pit on the right, and the black chasm Beersheba, on the left, a distance of about five miles from the entrance to the cave.

“Take care!” warned the guide; “it is wet and slippery here, and the path is very narrow.”

They were creeping on in single file when Stephen called back,—

“Mr. Hammond, you look pretty strong—would you help steady this railing? It seems a little shaky.”

Hammond came on ahead and stood bracing the bridge, which was one of the very few man-made structures in the cavern, while the other escorts led the girls, one at a time, around the abrupt and slippery ledge. In consequence of this stringing out of torches, the light was dim along the narrow way, so that even these few steps of advance had left the Bottomless Pit in darkness.

Suddenly there was a rapid, rushing sound in the rear; a whirring echo; a suppressed cry, and a heavy splash far below. The ladies screamed, and the faces of the men grew pallid with horror.

“My God! What was it? Who was it?” burst from their lips.

“Don’t go back, gentlemen!” shouted the guide. “It’s no use! Come on this side here—I’ll go back. First, see who is missing. If anybody is down there, the Lord have mercy on him, for man can’t help him.”

Soon the trembling, awe-struck party were safe on a platform, and the lights were bunched to their full radiance. Some one cried:

“Minnie Dare is not here!” “And, by Jove, Eldon Brand is not here, either!” said the chorus. Then in a low tone, “Could it have been suicide? How horrible!”

And this thought was the prevailing one, for the trials of the lovers were well known.

Jason Hammond ran back precipitately with the guide, and in a sort of frenzy peered far into the awful chasm. Words of blasphemy were on his lips as he began to realize to what end his persecution had driven the fair young creature he had sworn to win. As for Brand, he rejoiced in his fate. Could it have been an accident? He thought not.



“No use,” repeated the guide, “I can come back here and bring somebody who will go down on a rope. But I tell you the bottom of that place has never been found yet. We let a young fellow down by a rope last summer in a frolic—his name was Mr. Clarence Prentice—and he pretty soon called out to haul him up. Learned folks say a river runs down there, and there ain’t any bottom at all. Everything gets swept away with the current. I don’t know how it is, I am sure,”

Slowly the terror-stricken company wended their way back to earth, the light of enjoyment driven from their hearts. The girls gave themselves up to sobs and tears, and all dreaded to convey the tidings to the bereaved families.



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The men went back with ropes and grappling hooks, but nothing came of their labors. The bodies of the hapless lovers were not found, and none knew how they had gone over the treacherous crag into the abyss below. Surmises were rife, but prudence chose the better part of silent sympathy. The newspapers fairly gloated over the tragedy, and summer visitors were divided between curiosity to look upon the spot and fear lest they, too, might miss their footing; hence the profits of Cave Hotel were not noticeably on the decrease.

Colonel Dare refused to be comforted, unless, indeed, he could rejoice at the escape of the dove from the eagle's clutches. Now that the girl was lost to him, Hammond was willing to accept terms before declined; and the Dare ancestral home was at once put upon the market for sale.

Eldon Brand had no near relatives, but there were many to mourn his untimely fate.

* * * * *

Some hours after the disappearance of the lovers, Stephen, the guide, re-entered the cave with a large bundle in his arms, and accompanied by a single tourist, a sedate man who was a stranger to the region. They proceeded along the short route to the chapel. Adjusting the torches, Stephen gave a low whistle, when from behind a mammoth stalagmite came forth a young man and a fair maiden, who took their stand in the Double Niche.

Eldon Brand had left nothing undone during his hours of preparation; and when the man of God stood before the youthful pair, he held in his hands the properly authenticated document which was to cement the marriage tie in the civil courts. He had never before officiated at so unique a bridal, and when once more on terra firma proper, he bore the secret away to his Northern home.

Days passed and still the tragic fate of the hapless lovers held a place in fireside chats.

Night had fallen. All was quiet in the sparsely settled neighborhood of Cave Hotel. Stephen, the guide, with basket and torch, swiftly descended the winding stairs and entered the grand colonnade, where the bats still held high carnival. He pushed on, sometimes a little cramped for space, till he reached the black avenue he had called Dan. Stooping he possessed himself of a string that was fastened to a stake in the ground, and followed its course through intricate windings till a light glimmered in the distance. Whistling softly, he advanced more rapidly. A shadow was flung upon the curtains of a doorway, and parting the folds, a figure appeared at the opening.

"Ah, old fellow, you never forget us," was the cheery greeting.

“Not I,” said the man, “I think you will find your list all made out here,” depositing his basket inside.



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The room was small and irregular in shape, but good taste and moderate expenditure had converted it into a rustic boudoir of no mean pretensions. Cretonne hangings concealed the rough walls, and a few small pictures served to confine their bright folds to the uneven surface of earth and rock. The earthen floor was covered by a mat. A couch of the light, portable kind was daintily spread. A shelving rock, covered with a mat of Japanese print, held a never-failing lamp, and two camp-chairs completed the furniture, which had been conveyed into the cave with the utmost care and secrecy. A few books and a number of papers lay scattered about. The presiding deity of the fairy bower looked a radiant welcome for the trusty ally upon whom they were dependent.

"You dear old Stephen! Don't you think it is time we ventured out into the world again?"

"Why, I think this looks like Heaven!" he said, with the freedom of his office, "I don't know what you'd leave it for."

"Yes, but you know that if it were not for your basket we should be forced to appear. But I am learning to manage the ovens and pans. See here," and opening an inner curtain she revealed an alcove, where a few primitive cooking utensils were collected beside a small gasoline stove.

"I reckon your cooking don't come to much more than warming over my bill of fare," said Stephen, with an involuntary glance at the soft white hands, and an indulgent smile for the young housekeeper.

"Oh, but I do cook, really," she protested. "Eldon, did you ever taste nicer eggs? And the water down there carries off all the shells and scraps. Hear it rush along now!" and busily the stream did run to flow into Green river, so the knowing ones said. "But," she added; "if my father only knew. The moment we hear that that hateful man has gone abroad we will defy all the rest. Do you know, Stephen," in a lower tone, "we were very near being caught on the hill to-day. I was all bent over as usual in my old woman's dress, and Eldon was limping along on his crutch stick when—hark! what was that?"

"Did you hear anything?" asked Eldon, coming to her side, "don't be frightened, love. It could not have been any one. You are nervous."

The young wife's cheek paled a little as she reminded him of a frightful dream she had before mentioned.

"Nonsense, dear, we are safe as long as my bank holds out. In a short while we will brave the world and be at least a nine days' wonder."

Hoping to persuade Minnie Dare to elope with him, after their colloquy on the balcony the night of the ball, and thereby escape her persecutor, the young man had not followed the cave party on the long route without first amply supplying his purse.



Stephen had suggested the strategem they impulsively employed of temporarily disappearing into the black corridor opposite the Bottomless Pit, after throwing a heavy rock down the abyss to simulate a fall; and Stephen had mapped out for them the whole situation succeeding the supposed catastrophe. Thus far they had not lacked for comforts; and stolen visits in disguise to the upper regions had varied their solitude and given refreshing glimpses of sunlight.



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“Eldon, I am sure I heard a noise!” again exclaimed the girl, clinging in terror to his arm.

To appease her, the two men went out and made search. All was as usual—unless, indeed, a shred of cloth adhering to a jagged rock had not been there before. Stephen soon after left the pair, unconscious that a dark shadow was following him into the upper world, there to vanish among the shadows.

For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed; and this well-guarded secret, known to only four persons, was trembling at its foundation. For her beloved father’s sake the young wife was willing to endure privation; for she reasoned that Hammond would have no motive for vengeance if she were supposed to be lost; that her death would end the mysterious power that threatened disgrace to Colonel Dare. Stephen was paid well to be on guard, and his report that he had more than once seen Hammond in the vicinity, made them exercise extreme caution and vigilance in going outside.

At first the spirit of unrest had drawn the baffled suitor to the scene, where he had driven the unwilling maiden to her death, for he had loved her as well as a selfish nature can love. Gradually there dawned upon his mind a suspicion somewhat akin to the truth. Rumors were afloat that Stephen made nightly visits to the cave, not with exploring parties, but alone. A young couple had been seen wandering over the hills in the moonlight. Superstition said it was the ghosts of the ill-fated lovers. But when Jason Hammond heard these things they startled him as if struck with an electric shock. He did not believe in ghosts. He resolved to watch. He, too, saw the figures at night. He saw them disappear behind the steep ledge that leads downward into the bowels of the earth. He drew his own conclusions.

If true, what should stay his vengeance against those who had thus duped him? He sought his opportunity, and cautiously followed the guide unto the very portals of the lovers’ retreat. He heard the voices he remembered but too well. He knew now where to strike. He knew, too, that fear of him kept Minnie Dare thus hidden, as in a grave. Aye, she feared disgrace for her father, and more than all, she feared his vengeance against her husband—for he did not doubt that they were married. Husband? As the word forced itself, the man ground his teeth in baffled rage and hate. He would take care that the dreaded vengeance should be swift and sure.

The path to the subterranean retreat was perilous to a stranger; but having gone once, he was sure he could go again. The way was even now familiar enough as far as the black avenue of Dan. Here the string, placed for the convenience of the lovers, would guide him, and if his plans should be upset, he could retreat into the other black opening leading to the Bottomless Pit, where he now knew the lost pair had plunged into Beersheba instead of into the chasm, the two landmarks being exactly opposite. He



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had not forgotten the guide's account of these two unexplored regions where there was "nothing of interest to show tourists." He began to see through the plot from the hour of the so-called tragedy. How easy, with the artful guide's connivance, to cast a stone down the echoing ravine, then conceal themselves in the corridor close by, extinguish their torches, and await in silence the next coming of their assistant! He himself had been adroitly decoyed out of the way to steady the railing of the rickety bridge. The abrupt and narrow ledge had hidden them from view. The escape was easy. All was clear now, and the life of the man who had cheated him should pay the penalty. Should she continue to refuse his suit, she, too, must die. They should find their grave in the spot they loved so well. There would be none to tell the tale.

Armed with a revolver, he groped on, using a torch as far as he dared. The absence of crystal formations, so thick and shining elsewhere, left large, roomy passages easy to traverse, though there were frequent turns puzzling to the uninitiated. As he approached the cosy bower he heard, to his chagrin, the voice of the guide. What should he do? The odds were too many for him. Wait till next day when his victims would probably be alone? Risk going in upon them before nightfall? How had Stephen eluded his vigilance? In this dilemma he crept near enough to get a view of the interior. The sight of Minnie Brand seated at her husband's knee, his hand caressing her flowing curls, so inflamed his wrath that an oath burst from his lips. The sound penetrated the boudoir. It was this time unmistakable. Minnie uttered a faint cry. The two men started up, and snatching a torch, quickly lit it, and dashed out.

"To the inner chamber, my darling!" Eldon called back, as he threw down the folds of the portiere and rushed headlong with Stephen.

They scoured the Short Route avenue to its full length, while Hammond, his soul raging with murderous intent, traversed as rapidly as he dared, the Beersheba avenue toward the Long Route opening.

"By the eternal! He's gone the other way! But he can't get out! Right about!"

Retracing their steps they had to proceed more cautiously, but they soon caught sight of the figure ahead, now lost, now reappearing.

"It is that blackhearted villain, who has hounded us!" cried Eldon. "On! on!"

But the guide, true to his calling, shouted:

"Surrender, or you are a dead man! The Bottomless Pit is right ahead of you."

The fugitive halted a moment, glanced back, then dashed on again in defiance. At a sudden projection he tripped and fell, discharging the pistol into his own body. The



sound reverberated in a thousand echoes. The wounded man staggered to his feet, and managed to gain the frail bridge. Here he fell across the railing, swayed there an instant; then as his pursuers came up with helping hands, he plunged into the abyss below.



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The denizens of Cave City never tire of telling how Eldon Brand and his wife came back to the world, and how they fared in their romantic retreat. But there was a part of the story as strange as it was tragic. Upon dismantling the boudoir a leathern girdle was found, which contained several hundred dollars in gold, and a letter which ran thus:—

“I am a dying man. I cannot find my way out. I have not strength to call, I must perish here of disease and want. I will make one more effort, but feel that I shall fail. I have made my peace with God. In leaving this world I leave only one enemy behind. This is Jason Hammond, who has wronged me foully. Living or dead, I shall haunt him. To whomsoever shall give this poor body Christian burial, I bequeath my estate.” (Here followed the location and description of the property).

“Signed:

“DAVID HAMMOND.”

The paper was almost illegible. It had been written in pencil. An extended search was made and the skeleton of a man was found in one of the most inaccessible recesses of the cave’s many turnings. Beside the body lay a torch and an exhausted lunch basket. Eldon Brand had the remains reverently committed to earth.

The village gossips love to dwell upon the happiness of the brave young lovers, of the restoration of the gray-haired father to his old home in honor and in plenty, and of the blooming lads and lassies that sprang up as time passed tenderly over the heads of the reunited household.

A REVERIE

The twilight falls in gloom;
All day the fitful sun and sparkling show’r
Have played at hide-and-seek amid the bloom—
The varied tints of Spring’s fresh bow’r.
Oh, sure each bud and blossom knows the spell
Their subtle fragrance weaves about my brow;
Oh, sure a mystic tale their echoes tell—
Love’s soft, low-whispered vow.

The deep’ning sky o’ercast,
The shadows slowly length’ ning ’neath the trees,
The tender leaves, swift in the vernal blast,
To catch the music of the breeze;
The young lush grass a-peep above the earth,



The trailing vines that to the lattice cling,
Ah, these to fancies warm and true give birth,
And o'er my senses fling.

On landscape charms I glance;
The city's distant hum is lull'd to rest,
Athwart the sunset dark'ning clouds advance.
And shut from sight the rosy west;
A dreamy orison enshrines my heart.
Deep shelter'd in the sacred haunts of home,
Where elfin sprites among the eeries dart,
Irradiate in the gloam.

Shine out, sweet love, unveil
Thy ecstasy erst wrought in accents wild;
Within my soul there breathes an anguish'd wail,
Unsoothed by resignation mild.
I would not, if I might, give back the joy
That sweeps my pulses with enraptured thrill;
In transports pure the moments cannot cloy—
My craving lingers still.



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Nor time may rend the tie;
The fealty that holds the captive will
In potent thrall, if sever'd soon,
Poor human faith a-blight and chill must die.
O birdlings, blossoms, leaflets, flow'rs,
Give forth chaste spirits to enchant the air;
Let silver'd mem'ries glad the lonely hours,
And crown my picture fair.

* * * * *

The night comes on apace;
The cricket's chirp, the woodland murmur's swell,
Bid nature's changeling melodies efface
The glamour of yon phantom spell.
The flashing morn adown the glist'ning aisles,
A dew-embowered hill and grove and lea,
With ruthless light will scatter fairy wiles,
Nor leave my love to me.

—E.D.P.

THE MISER AND THE ANGEL

'Twas cold and bleak that winter's night,
When hover'd o'er the dying light,
The miser hugg'd his shrunken form,
And grudged the fire that made him warm.

The old worn latch arose and felt,
He started up with threat'ning yell—
'Begone!'—as in the open door
A woman stood, faint and foot-sore.

"Just this," she begged, "this rotten board—
'Twill not be missed from out your hoard."
"Take it and go!" he thundered out—
"Oh, thanks," she moaned, and turned about.

Another shivering night he sat;
A lad came in—"Please, Mister,"—"What?"
"This piece of rope." He said not nay,
But curs'd him as he went his way. And once again there ventured nigh



A child, who fled with frightened cry,
As at her head a rusty key—
The gift she craved—he flung with glee.

* * * * *

The sands of life were nearly run;
“What good to others have you done?”
The angel ask’d. The miser sighed.
“Not one kind act,” he sadly cried. “Not one? Did you ne’er give, nor lend
Relief to neighbor, suppliant, friend?”
The dying eyes were closed—he thought
On all the misery he had wrought.

A ray of light! “I gave a board.”
“’Tis well—’twill span death’s river ford.”
“A mouldy rope.” “’Twill reach from earth
To Heaven. What more of feeble worth?”
“A rusty key.” “Unlocks the gate.
Is this the sum? No—not too late;
The sinner’s Friend has room for all,—
The least you do is not too small.”

—E.D.P.

REST

For so He giveth His beloved sleep.

IN MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

A soul is gather’d home;
At morn, at eve, on mission kind intent,
Her footsteps evermore were wont to roam,
Till years their ceaseless labor spent.
Each day its olive leaf of grace brought in—
garner’d leaf from charity’s broad field;
Each day’s good deeds redeem’d a life from sin,
And gray’d anew her shield.



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The lowly suppliant bless'd,
When to the hovel came her welcome smile;
The cold, the hungry, friendless and distress'd,
With gen'rous aid she cheer'd the while;
And not alone the desolate and poor
Sought counsel of her wisdom and her love;
The high-born and the cultured cross'd her door
To share her treasure-trove.

A nature great and high,
No puny thought could dwell within her breast;
How sad to see her worth untimely die!
Yet who may wail the needful rest?
Her willing hand, her tireless step, her active brain,
Rear'd lofty landmarks on the busy way;
The haunts that knew her long'd with yearning vain,
The reaper's scythe to stay.

The strife at last is o'er;
The strife that all great souls must needs endure;
And anchor'd fast on Eden's peaceful shore,
Her roving bark is strong and sure.
The world is full of workers for the right;
"They also serve who only stand and wait."
No waiting servant she; with armor bright
She pass'd the pearly gate.

—E.D.P.

THE CHANGED CROSS

A little gilt-edge volume,
Its covers reddish brown,
It glossy leaves one burden bore,
Without the cross, no crown.

I turned the pages slowly,
The fly-leaf wore a name;
With eyes suffused in quick response,
I noted whence it came.

A tender message bade me
Take up the lowly cross,



For love and mercy's joint decree
Apportions every loss.

"No cross—no crown"—the mandate,
With cruel meaning falls;
The heavy-laden soul shrinks back,
The lonely way appals.

Ah, me! sweet friend, I thank thee;
This little ray of light
Steals o'er the darken'd firmament,
Illuming sorrow's night.