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POETRY.

FOOTSTEPS.

To the quiet hour of gloaming,
When the bush is upon the earth,
When the stars gleam out and the low wind moan
I sit and listen—listen alone,
By the side of the desolate hearth.

I listen, but not to the homeless leaves,
As they drift 'neath the window-pane;
Nor the sighing wind from the fir-crowned hill,
Nor the staccato of the rattle on the sill,
Nor the whisper of careless rain.

I listen, I listen, and but to hear
The footsteps that fall around;
The footsteps that gladden my life of yore,
The footsteps that seek my side no more,
That fall on no earthly ground.

The tiny steps of my first-born
Come pattering quick and soft;
He had trod like a man, had he stayed, by this,
Yet I yearn for the baby kiss
He leaved to give so oft.

His feet tread rings on gallantly,
When I used to spring from this same low seat,
The corner I loved the best to greet
As he strode through the evening dew.

Slow and heavy, and quick and light,
The echoes around me come;
The steps that through youth's gay footsteps rang,
Of friends forgotten, of friends estranged,
Who once made life and home.

All well, poor wretch from the wreck
All memory saved and stored,
The sounds that in the sweet past years
Are dearer to me than the light that gleams
On the lonely Present's shores.

THE STORY-TELLER.

T. S. L.

"T. S. L." That was the only mark there was upon it, the three initial letters engraved upon the inside. I turned and twisted it in my fingers, as I stood under the large Eastern clock, the diamonds shoot forth their fiery lines of dazzling brilliancy. Close examination proved it to be a most beautiful and valuable jewel, a heavy gold ring, with a shield of blue enamel. In the centre of the shield sparkled one large diamond of purest water, and above it a number of smaller stones, yet each of remarkable beauty and purity were grouped in the form of a crescent. I had never seen a gem more valuable and unique, but its possession was simply an annoyance to me.

I was making a hasty business trip from my home in Deo, Ohio, through some of the large Eastern cities, and had stopped in New York for a few days, having resolved to crowd two weeks' work into one if possible. I had arrived in the city after all places of business were closed, had eaten a hasty dinner, and gone to the theatre. Meeting some friends, we had supped together, and talked until the clocks warned us that we had stolen more than one hour from a new day. Upon my return to my hotel, tired and despatched, I had found, upon the stairs, the ring I have described. It was then after two o'clock, evidently no time to trouble myself about my business. I went to my room, and in a safe corner of my pocketbook, and retired.

The next morning, rising late, and feeling very much hurried, I merely mentioned in the office that, if any one inquired for a diamond ring, I had found one, and went literally about my business. During my travels about the city, I took the ring to a leading jeweler, and found his estimate of the value of the stones even higher than my own.

"The workmanship is exquisite," he said to me, "evidently not done in this country."
No inquiries having been made at the hotel, I advertised my windfall for three days, and considered that I had done all that could be expected. Still I did not care to wear what was really not my own, and put the ring away in a private drawer of my writing-desk, with some other valuables, contentedly hoping the loser was wealthy enough to bear the loss philosophically. When I left New York, I gave my address at the hotel and newspaper office; but a year later no word of inquiry respecting the ring had reached me.

The business firm of which I was the junior partner required my services as a sort of traveling agent, my sojourn in different cities being sometimes for months, sometimes only for a few days. We were introducing throughout the United States a new and valuable patent, with a success that was rapidly making us all men of wealth. I being the youngest in the firm, and having the others were old enough to inform me a pleasing manner and ready tongue, was chosen to point out the merits of our bread-winner to the merchants who could dispose of it for us.

One of my trips southward—a year later than my visit to New York—found me settled in New Orleans, with letters of introduction from many of the leading merchants of other cities to those in my new abode.
I was soon assured of a pleasant social standing, and one of the most delightful homes where I was made welcome was that of Monsieur Lecourt, a French gentleman, and a merchant of high standing and large wealth, who owned valuable plantations not far from the city. He was a tall, stately gentleman, with white hair and mustache, and a grave face, that was often shadowed by a deep sadness, though it never failed to light up in courteous welcome when I approached.

I called twice, and spent the evening in the library with my host; but the third time, as the servant opened the door, a lady rose from a seat beside the old gentleman, and moved toward the door.
"Stay, Adela," he said; "this is my friend, Mr. Haven, of whom I have spoken to you. My daughter Adela, Mr. Haven."

The lady returned my greeting, and resumed her seat beside her father, and as we conversed in the best French I could command, I found my eyes wandering ever to rest on her face and figure.
"She was tall and slender without be-

ing thin; the figure was exquisitely rounded, and possessed a peculiar willowy grace in its drooping attitudes and motions. The face was very beautiful, a perfect oval, with regular features, and large, soft brown eyes, shaded by long lashes, broad forehead. But upon the fair face, in the graceful setting of the figure, was visible a deep, settled melancholy very painful to witness in one who could scarcely have stepped out of her teens. Her face was always pale, and looked like marble contrasting with her deep mourning dress. Her voice was always low, and had an accent of sadness in every tone.

Monsieur Lecourt was deeply interested in my patent, and inclined to make some investment of his idle capital in the enterprise, so that we were often together discussing business, and a soon became a matter of course to find Adela with her father in the library.
It was evident that the bond uniting the two was very close, and that the father rarely moved unaccompanied by his daughter. So it was that we became a trio often seen in the library, Adela grasping with clear intelligence all the advantages in her father's proposed venture, and questioning and pointing out all the objections. Yet, business once over, Adela was also ready for general conversation, proving in her every word not only a refined, cultivated intellect, but a familiarity with current topics rarely met with in a lady, and doubtless due in a great measure to her father's constant companionship.

As the months of my sojourn passed on, I perceived little changes in regard to Adela Lecourt, that seemed to promise that the heavy cloud evidently resting over her young life was rolling back somewhat. She would smile oftener, and I noted a softening in her dress, and an improvement in her manner. Soft white lace replaced the heavy black crape at her throat and wrists, and she wore her hair in looser, fuller fashion. The long white hands that had rested in listless idleness upon her lap now busied themselves with pretty feminine work, embroidery, and soft woolen trifles. True, the work would lie often neglected if we spoke of topics that interested her, but then her eyes would kindle with an enthusiasm they never showed in the early days of our friendship.

My friendship true and sincere. I knew I was welcome to laughter as well as father, and for the time I asked no more than the cordial greetings given me so freely. Sometimes we formed parties for horseback rides to the plantations, and I found Adela the centre of loving friends; but I liked best our long evenings, spent in the library, drawing-room, or wide garden summer-house, as the whim of the moment dictated. Calm, even, and uneventful, our friendship knew no waverings, and seemed likely to endure through life.

Four months passed rapidly; my business engagements were few, and I spent, when one evening, calling at Monsieur Lecourt's, I found him alone in the summer-house. After some desultory chat, the old gentleman said to me: "To-morrow I hope to introduce to you my nephew, Theodore Lecourt. He arrived from Paris to-night."

"Indeed!" I said, trying to seem interested. "Does he make a long visit here?"
"His visit has been to Europe. He has been nearly two years abroad, but this is his home. He will be my heir, as he is the affianced husband of my daughter."

My heart seemed to turn to stone as the old gentleman spoke. For the first time I realized what the past four months had cost me. I had given my whole heart to Adela Lecourt, never knowing it till I heard she was beyond my reach. Affianced to another! I could not speak, and whether Monsieur Lecourt guessed or not the cause of my silence, he smoked his fragrant Havana, and said no more for a long time, then started a new topic for conversation.

The evening shadows deepened and lengthened, till the soft, dim twilight rested on all things, and Adela came not to her accustomed place by her father's side. When, at a late hour, I took my leave reluctantly, she was still invisible.
The next morning, before I left my room I was handed an invitation to an entertainment at Monsieur Lecourt's, given in honor of his nephew's arrival. It would have been too marked a difference in our friendly relations for me to decline, and hastily writing an acceptance, I tried by unusual attention to business to forget my heartache. Another subject troubled me. The party was not to occur for two days. Was I expected to absent myself in the interval, or to make my evening calls as usual?

All day my mind dwelt upon Adela. Was the deep, settled melancholy upon her face the grief for the absence of her fiance, and should I now see the lovely face lighted by hope and joy? I ground my teeth as I thought of this, inwardly thinking I had rather see it cold in death than radiant with love-light for another. Requiring some private papers during the day, I opened my desk, and in one of the recesses, where it had long lain forgotten, sparkled the ring I had found in New York, the serpent diamond crescent upon the deep blue shield. I took it up carefully, admired it a while, and slipped it upon my finger. The papers I had come to seek, being interesting and important, I was soon busied with them, and closed the desk, forgetting to return the ring to its place. Afterward, I thought:

"Well, it is mine, I suppose. Nobody else has ever asked for it, so I might as well wear it."
I could easily plead business as my excuse for absence from Monsieur Lecourt's for a day or two, and, dreading to meet Adela now, I resolved to do so. It was some relief to my sore heart to become suddenly very active in business, and I ran about soliciting orders, making proposals, and actually doing more in forty-eight hours than I had done in any previous month. Yet the

dreaded day came at last, when I must meet my rival, and judge by Adela's face if the recent changes in it had been caused by the prospect of the speedy arrival of her fiance.

Being busy in the middle of the day, and not caring to return home at that hour, I strolled into the St. Charles, and ordered dinner.
Two gentlemen were seated at the table where I took my place, conversing in a low tone, but earnestly. Without listening, or indeed much heeding them, I could not avoid hearing what was said. Evidently they were very intimate friends discussing a love affair, and I said once:

"But," said the other, "you told me it was an affair of long ago. Can you have a rival?"
"I have thought of that," and the speaker crushed double a little salt-ponn to his forehead, and said:

"The last of the horrified guests left the house, a stiff corpse was a remaining of the unfortunate Theodore Lecourt."
Monsieur Lecourt implored me to remain. Adela went to her room, and the old gentleman, after he had given all necessary directions, drew me into the library.

"Tell me all you can, Mr. Haven," he said. "You were in the summer-house?"
"All I could tell was soon told, not omitting my own love-story."
"You think Adela loves you?" he asked.

"She has said so."
"The explanation is much. Poor Theodore! But you have not spoken before to Adela, how did you become possessed of that?"

As he spoke, he pointed to the ring I had found in New York. A few words told that story, as well.
"Godfrey," he said to me, "you think me a hard father—one who would have forced my only child into marriage with a man she hated, and whose heart she abhorred. I might plead the custom of my country, for French marriages are too often contracted for money or family convenience. But it was not exactly the case here. Theodore and Adela have been affianced since they were children, and I had no idea that my child had any dislike to her cousin, still less did I dream she loved another."

"But, sir, she was so sad! Some cause must exist for such deep depression."
"There was cause. Her mother, who was always an invalid, was sent to Saratoga by her physician, and Adela accompanied her. I was just leaving Paris, and I was detained here; but we had friends going to the Springs for a summer holiday, and my wife and daughter joined their party. Instead of gaining health, Madame Lecourt became rapidly worse, and was attacked by a fever and violent delirium. In one of her paroxysms of delirium, she sprang from her bed, and rushed to the window of her room. Adela, who was alone with her, struggled with her, crying loudly for assistance, but before it came, her mother had burst from her arms, and thrown herself from the window. She was killed instantly by the fall. I hastened to Saratoga, to find Adela very ill, but kindly nursed by her friends. When she was sufficiently recovered, we returned home, bringing with us the body of my beloved wife."

"I was in New York a few hours, and during that time she returned to me Theodore's ring from her wasted hand. For many months the shock of her mother's death, and the self-reproach she would feel, kept her in a state of deep sadness, that seemed to threaten life and reason. Since you came she has been slowly recovering her health and spirits, until Theodore's return threw her back again. To-night she roused herself, I think now, hoping to see you. I have been blind, Godfrey, blind!"

"Do you feel, sir, that I have been, innocently, heaven knows, the murderer of your nephew?"
"No. From childhood Theodore had been subject to such convulsions as you describe. There was an injury to the brain in his school-days, that was never cured. Any sudden excitement would produce convulsions; and we have been frequently warned that a sudden violent shock would be fatal. Doubtless he saw the ring upon your finger at the St. Charles to-day. His initials are engraved about it. There was an injury to the brain in his school-days, that was never cured. Any sudden excitement would produce convulsions; and we have been frequently warned that a sudden violent shock would be fatal. Doubtless he saw the ring upon your finger at the St. Charles to-day. His initials are engraved about it. There was an injury to the brain in his school-days, that was never cured. Any sudden excitement would produce convulsions; and we have been frequently warned that a sudden violent shock would be fatal. Doubtless he saw the ring upon your finger at the St. Charles to-day. 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