
NO. 36.

BY SPERANZA

We never knew a childhood's mirth and gladness
 Nor the proud heart of youth here and brave;
 Ah, a death-like dream of wretchedness and sadness
 Is life's weary journey to the grave.
 Oh, day by day we were sunk and lower,
 Till the God-like soul within
 Failed crushed beneath the fearful demon power
 Of poverty and sin.
 So we toil on, on with fever burning
 In heart and brain;
 So we toil on, on through bitter scorning,
 Want, wear, and pain.
 We dare not raise our eyes to the blue Heaven,
 Or the toil must cease—
 We dare not breathe the fresh air God has given
 One hour in peace.
 We must toil through the light of life is burning,
 How dim!
 We must toil on our sick bed feebly turning,
 Our eyes to Him
 Alone can hear the pale lip faintly saying,
 "I have no more to live."
 While the pale hands uplifted aid the praying,
 "Lord, grant us Death!"

Y. T. S. ARTHUR

"None is intended," I do assure you," replied Mr. Mason, "with something deprecating in his tone. But you must remember, Mr. Page, that you never sought to win the young girl's affection, and that, as a consequence the offer of marriage which you wish to make her, will be received with surprise, and it may be disapproval. I wish to approach her on this subject, with proper discretion. To be too precipitate, may startle her into instant repugnance, and you know the result."

"She loves you, does she?" inquired Page with a nervous gleam of manner.

"A child never would have a parent more tenderly cherished than I do," replied Mr. Mason.

"Give her, then, an unadorned history of your embarrassment. Show her how your fortunes are trembling on the brink of ruin, and that you have lost all hope of relief and safety left. The day she becomes my wife you are relieved from all anxiety, and you know the result."

The old man did not reply. He was lost in a deep reverie. It is doubtful whether he heard all that the man had said.

"Will you do this?" replied Page, and with some impatience in his tone.

Mason aroused himself as from a dream, and answered with great firmness and dignity.

"Mr. Page, the struggle in my mind is over. I am prepared for the worst. I have no idea that your Florence will favor my suit, and I will not use a single argument to influence her. In that matter she must remain perfectly free. Approach her as a man, and win her if you have the power to do so. It is your only hope."

As if stung by a serpent, Page started from his chair.

"You will repeat this?" he angrily retorted, and repeated it bitterly.

"I came to you with honorable proposals for your daughter's hand, you treated them as an answer to night. Now you meet me with insult!—Sir! You will repeat this?"

Mr. Mason ventured no reply, but merely bowed in token of his willingness to meet and bear all consequences that might come.

For a long time after this angry visitor had retired. At last Mr. Mason crossed the floor with measured step. He had long ago the bell, and directed the servant who came, to say to Florence he wished to see her.

When Florence came, she was surprised to see that her father was strongly agitated.

"Sit down, dear," he said in a trembling voice, "I have something to say to you that must be no longer concealed."

Florence looked wonderingly into her father's face, while her heart began to sink.

Just then a servant opened the door and ushered in a stranger. He was a tall, fine looking young man, just in the prime of life. Florence quickly retired, and before the stranger faced his eyes upon her face, and marked the sweet expression.

"Pardon the intrusion, sir," he said, as soon as the young girl had left the room, "but facts that I have learned this evening have prompted me to call upon you without a moment's delay. My name is Greer, of the firm of Greer, Miller & Co."

Mr. Mason bowed, and said—

"I know your house very well, and now remember I have met you more than once in business relations."

"Yes, you have bought one or two bills of us," replied the visitor. Then after a moment's pause he said in a changed tone—

"Mr. Mason, I learned to-night, from a source which leaves no room to doubt the truth of the statement, that your affairs have become seriously embarrassed. That you are, in fact, on the very verge of bankruptcy."

"Tell me frankly, whether this is indeed so; and if so, in what manner, nor from a condescendence and sinister motive, but to the end that I may prevent the threatened disaster, if it is in my power to do so."

Mr. Mason was dumb with surprise at so unexpected a declaration. He made two or three efforts to speak, but his lips uttered no sound.

"Confide in me, sir," said the visitor. "Trust me as you would trust your own brother, and lean upon my arm, and I will struggle be it needed, long. Tell me, then, is it as I have said?"

"It is," was all that the merchant could utter.

"How much will save you? Mention the sum, and if within the compass of my ability to raise, you shall have it in hand to-morrow. Will twenty thousand dollars relieve you from your present embarrassment?"

"Fully."

"Then let your anxiety subside. Mr. Mason, that sum you shall have. To-morrow morning will see you a good seaman." And the visitor arose, and before his bewildered auditor had had sufficient recovered his senses to know what to think or say.

In the morning, true to his promise, Mr. Greer called upon Mr. Mason, and tendered him a check of ten thousand dollars, with his note of hand for thirty days for ten thousand more, which was almost the same as money.

Mr. Mason's first thought lay before him upon the desk, and ere he had touched them, Mr. Mason looked earnestly at the man who had suddenly taken the character of a disinterested self-sacrificing friend, and said—

"My dear sir, I cannot understand this. A you not laboring under some error?"

"Oh no. You once did me a service that I am now only seeking to repay. It is my first opportunity, and I embrace it eagerly."

"Did you a service? When?"

"Twenty years ago," replied the man. "I was a poor boy, and you were a man of wealth. On a hot day I went to stand a long distance with a basket. While toiling up a hill, with the heat upon me, and almost overcome with heat and fatigue, you came along, and not only spoke to me kindly, but took my basket and carried it to the top of the hill. Ah, sir, you did not know how deeply that act of kindness struck upon my heart, and I longed for an opportunity to show you my gratitude. But I had no means how grateful I felt. But no came. Often afterward I met you on the street, and looked into your face with pleasure. But you did not remember me. Ever since I have regarded you with very different feelings from those I have entertained for others; and there has been no time that I would not have put myself out to serve you. Last night I heard of your embarrassments, and immediately called upon you. The rest you know."

Mr. Mason was astounded at so strange a declaration.

"Do you remember the fact to which I referred?" asked Greer.

"It had faded from my external memory entirely; but your words have brought back a recollection of the fact. But it was a little matter, and I would not be so foolish as to have given it any importance."

"But it was not a little matter, sir," replied Mr. Mason.

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