

The Solid Lover.

He came to the tower of her I love,
Twanging his sweet guitar;
He called her in song his snow-white dove—
His lily, his fair, bright star!

He sang that his love was beyond compare—
His voice was as sweet as his song;
He said she was pure and gentle and fair—
And I thought that he wasn't far wrong.

Why, he sang, and played till the moon was high—
And sweet was the love-born strain—
Till the night caught up each tremulous sigh
And echoed each sweet refrain.

He told how he loved her o'er and o'er,
With passion in every word;
In song that I never heard before—
And sweeter ones never was heard!

And I—was I jealous? Well, certainly not!
I was glad to hear his lay;
I even echoed him—soft and low—
When he sang what I wanted to say.

For while he stood 'neath the window sill,
Singing my darling's charms,
I sat in the parlor, dark and still,
With the girl that he sang in my arms,
And what in the thunder did I have to be mad about.
—Judge Kenna.

MAY'S SACRIFICE.

"My last hope rests in you, May."
"In me, father?"
May Warren made answer in a tone of surprise, raising her sad anxious eyes to her father's face.

As if her gaze discomposed him, Mr. Warren turned his head, and his glance wandered restlessly around the apartment. He was an old man, with a tall, spare figure, thin, gray hair, and was sitting in an arm-chair by a table covered with papers, while his pretty daughter, May, sat beside him on an ottoman. She repeated the words:

"In me, father?"

"Yes," he replied, starting from a moment's abstraction. "Do you remember Colonel Leighton, my dear?"

"Colonel Leighton? An old man with a heavy beard partly gray, and pleasant blue eyes. He dined with us a few weeks ago. Yes, I remember him, father."

"Not so very old, May—not so old as I am—and one of the finest men living. He is wealthy, very wealthy, too."

He met his daughter's questioning gaze fully now, as if he wished her to read something in his face. She kept her dark eyes fixed searchingly upon his countenance, the ebb and flow of the soft color upon her cheeks betraying the quick pulsation of her heart.

"What do you mean, father?" she asked, at length.

"I saw him last night. He offered to help me—save me, if—"

"If what, father?"

"If I would give you to him."

The words came hurriedly from Mr. Warren's lips, as if he feared that if he deliberated he should not be able to utter them at all. As they fell on his daughter's ear she started to her feet, pushing back her hair from her pale face in a bewildered sort of way, as if she were half stunned.

"Marry me, father? Colonel Leighton?" she cried, in a low tone.

Mr. Warren took her hand and drew her down to her seat again.

"May, Colonel Leighton will be a good husband to you. I have known him from boyhood, and understand perfectly his character and principles. He loves you—will be kind to you, and strive in every way to make you happy. And more—and more, May; he will save me from beggary!"

He paused, but his child, with her face bowed upon her hands, made no reply—nor stirred. The mute distress that her attitude betokened was not unnoticed by him.

"I do not force you to do this, May, remember; the matter is left entirely to your own choice. But you know what my wish is—what the alternative will be if you do not accept the offer."

She knew only too well. Fully she realized how absolutely necessary the luxuries to which her father had been accustomed, were to him. Absolute loss of possession did not seem the most dreadful thing in the world to her but she knew what a wreck it would make of him. In her youth and strength the future would still be bright and full of hope to her; but how could he, with his aged frame and burden of sixty years, commence life anew? The hopeful thought that she could work for him and supply him with his accustomed comforts, afforded him but a moment's comfort. To him, with his stubborn, aristocratic blood, this would be the most severe trial of all—his delicately reared, petted child laboring for his support. He would never be reconciled to it. There was no alternative, she saw at a glance. Then, with a desperate effort to think calmly, she recalled the form of Colonel Leighton. She remembered his bowed head and silvered beard, his dark, deeply furrowed face, and fifty years. She could get no further. A younger face, with merry, azure eyes, and tossing, sunny hair, sprang up in strong contrast. Stretching out her hands to her father, as if for pity, she cried out:

"I cannot, father, I cannot!"

The old man sank back with a groan.

"I cannot, I cannot!" he cried,

shuddering. There were no reproaches, only those bitter words and that despairing attitude. White and tearless she sat at his feet, the agony of her heart written on her face. The wild, desperate thought that the sacrifice was possible, occurred to her.

"Father, dear father!"

He raised his head, whitened with the frosts of his sixty winters, and looked at her with a gleam of hope in his sunken eyes. She crept into his arms as she had done when a child, and laid her soft cheek against his wrinkled brow.

"You know that I love you, father," she said. "I can never remember you but as kind, tender and forbearing with me. Your heart has been my home all my life. I will work, beg, suffer for you—I will die for you—oh, how willingly, if need be! But that—oh, father, you do not know what it is that you ask?"

He did not speak, but a moan broke uncontrollably from his lips as he rested his head upon her shoulders. The struggle in her heart sent dark, shadowy waves across her face. Could she—could she?

"Father," she whispered hurriedly, "let me go now. I will see you again—answer you to-morrow."

And she left him.

He could not see her face in the gathering darkness, only a glimpse of something white, but he felt the quivering of her lips as she bent to kiss him, and reached out his arms to embrace her but she was gone.

"Heaven pity me!" The words came like a wall from her lips. She was alone in her chamber, flung prostrate upon a low couch, with her face hid in the cushions. The sound of the rustling foliage of the garden, and the chirping of the birds, came in through the open window with the damp evening breeze, and the pale light of the rising moon filled the room with a soft radiance, but she was unconscious of everything but her misery. The house was so quiet that the sound of a footstep crossing the hall below fell upon the ear and aroused her—the library door—and then a voice uttered a few words of commonplace greeting. She remembered it well, and sprang to her feet with a desperate, insane thought of flight. But the door closed, the house was still again and she was calmer!

She crossed the room listlessly and drew back the curtain of the window. The scene without was beautiful. The moonlight lay broadly on the garden, turning to silver the tops of the trees and making the little lake beyond look like a great white pearl. Gazing earnestly downward she saw a tall, shadowy figure standing beneath the shade of the old elm. With a low cry she sprang from the room and a moment later stood beside her lover.

"Come at last, my treasure," cried Mark Winchester, folding her in his arms. She remained leaning passively against her breast, while he pressed passionate kisses upon her forehead, cheek and lips.

"Why have you made me wait so long, darling?" he said, softly, and taking both her slender hands in one of his he pressed them to his lips. "Why, how cold you are? How you tremble!" he continued, as she clung to him. "What is the matter, May?"

"I waited because I dreaded to meet you, Mark."

"Why? what do you mean?"

And, brokenly through her tears and sobs she told him all. He did not speak or stir while she was talking, and when she had finished there was a long silence. She lacked courage to say more—he would not ask. She repeated the last words, "And to-morrow I must give my answer." Still he did not speak.

She looked up at him. In the dim light she could see his rigid, agonized face, white lips and gleaming eyes. She stole her arms about his neck and drew his forehead down to her lips.

"Speak to me, Mark; say that you do not blame me."

He knew that she had decided, and what that decision was.

"And you love me, May, and marry that old man?"

"Heaven pity me Mark, for I must. I will become his wife, and will be true and faithful to him, for he will be kind to me. You will hear of me thus, and when you do, remember my words, Mark, that you have my heart."

"I will remember, May. God help us both, for I shall never forget you. They shall bury me with this upon my heart."

And he drew a tress of soft brown hair from his bosom.

For a moment more—one little, precious moment he held her against his heart, and then kissed her, put her gently from him, and was gone.

For a moment she stood alone under the trees, with clasped hands and face upraised to the quiet sky, and then she turned and walked silently toward the house. A bright light from the library window streamed down on her, and as she looked up she saw the shadow of a bowed figure fall across the curtain.

"Father, you are awake! The marriage is off."

A hand was laid suddenly on her arm, and she started with a low cry.

"Good evening, Miss May," said Colonel Leighton. "I have been seeking you."

She bowed and stood silently before him with a calm, downcast face.

"I have been talking with your father," he continued, carelessly pulling a rose from a bush near them. "He tells me that you have promised to think of my proposal, and let us know what your decision is to-morrow. Is there anything I can say which will influence you to form that conclusion in my favor?"

"You cannot say anything which will influence me in the least, Colonel Leighton. As my father has said, you shall have my answer to-morrow."

He glanced at the young face, so sad in its calm dignity, and then looked down at his fingers again, which were busy tearing to pieces the blossom he held, and following the crimson petals, to fall at his feet, as if they were the fragments of the heart he was breaking.

In the long silence that followed she glanced up at him once, with a thought of flinging herself upon his mercy by giving him her confidence; but the stern expression of his face repelled her.

"Miss May," he said suddenly, "you are averse to this marriage."

His tone aided in rendering his words an assertion. She was startled, but replied, quietly, "Do you think so?"

"I must be blind if I could think otherwise," he continued, with sudden energy. "May Warren, you know that you hate me—that you would rather die than become my wife, were it not for your father's sake."

Before she realized what she was doing, the monosyllabic "yes" slipped from her lips.

"And in doing this, do you realize how you would wrong us both?"

She was silent.

"It shall never be. I shall never call you my wife, knowing that you do not love me that your heart is not in my keeping. I will not tell you of my hopes, how I have dreamed that my last days would be my happiest ones—it would not interest you. Now I have only to say that you are free as if I had never seen your sweet face."

He paused for a reply, but she made none. Bewildered by her position she did not know what to say.

"I know that I have only myself to reproach," he went on. "My motive in offering your father my assistance was a purely selfish one. The consequences are only what I deserve. I had no thought of the long years during which he had been my true and faithful friend, but cruelly took advantage of his position to gain my own ends. Yes, I am properly punished."

There was a bitterness in his tone, a dependency in his attitude, that greatly changed his accustomed, dignified composure of manner. Half-unconscious of what she did, only sensible of the pity she felt for him, the young girl put her hand upon his arm and then said softly:

"Forgive me."

"Forgive me rather, my child," he said, gently taking the little hand in one of his, "for the misery I have caused you. I should have known that our paths in life could never be one. But good night, I will not detain you."

She did not shrink from him as he bent down to kiss her forehead with his last words. He stepped aside to allow her free passage to the house, but she did not move.

"You are thinking of your father," he said. "Do not be distressed on his account. Remember me in your prayer to-night and sleep sweetly. It is all I ask."

He did not wait to hear her fervent "God bless you!" or witness her burst of joyful tears, but quickly left her.

The morning sunshine streamed boldly into the apartment of old Mr. Warren, where he lay in a heavy sleep of physical and mental exhaustion. The forenoon was far advanced when a servant aroused him, informing him that Colonel Leighton waited him in the library. Making a hasty toilet, the old man left his chamber and went to join his friend. The gentleman met cordially, and Colonel Leighton immediately requested that May might be sent for. They waited but a few minutes before the door swung noisily open and wearing a white morning robe, the young girl entered. At a motion from her father she sat down upon a low seat at his feet, and then glanced up with a confiding smile at Colonel Leighton, who stood leaning against the mantelpiece, with an expression of face half sad, half admiring.

"We are waiting for your answer, May," said Mr. Warren, quietly.

"I will leave the matter entirely in Colonel Leighton's hands," she replied. The old man glanced perplexedly from her to his friend. Colonel Leighton stepped forward.

"My old friend, James Warren," he said, "I met your daughter last night

and talked with her. I discovered with what feelings she regarded a marriage with me and cannot allow the sacrifice she would make for your sake. I will never marry her; she is free. And now I have to ask your pardon for the unmanly way in which I have taken advantage of your embarrassment and have come so near to destroying the happiness of your child. Every power of mine shall be exerted to its utmost to relieve you and all the reward I ask is the knowledge that you and May do not despise me. Nay, nay, no thanks I deserve rather to be scorned for the part I have acted. But I have one favor to ask, old friend. Will you allow me to choose a husband for your daughter?"

"You have my full and free permission," replied Mr. Warren, smiling through his tears. "But I hope you will be more successful in your choice than I have been."

"Never fear," said the Colonel, with a glance at May. Flinging open a door that led to another apartment, he called. "Now, my boy!" and Mark Winchester sprang into the room.

"Behold your future son-in-law," said Colonel Leighton; and ere the old man could comprehend the scene, the young couple knelt for his blessing. At a motion from his friend, he gave it willingly, and never was there a happier party.

Through the interposition of his friend, Mr. Warren was saved from ruin and his daughter made happy. When May that mourning a keel for a solution of the problem of Colonel Leighton's knowledge of Mark he replied, "I did not wait half an hour in the garden to no purpose, little one." And she understood that he had overheard her conversation with her lover. Through his influence Mark's talents as an artist became known to the world and a few years afterward he became a popular painter and a wealthy man and, out of gratitude to his benefactor, he christened his first-born son Edward Leighton Winchester.

A Railway Ladder.

Earnest Ingersoll, in the *Massachusetts* for May, says that Marshall Pass, by which the main range of the Rockies is crossed, is a great railway ladder. I do not propose to describe it—a whole article by itself would be needed for that. At its foot you are six thousand feet above the sea level; at its summit you are ten thousand; yet on either side weather-beaten peaks rise nearly four thousand feet above your head. If you will carefully toss a cord down upon the floor (only guarding against its making any crossed loops) you will have a fair idea of the way the track runs here. It is always a steep grade upward, but then to attain the regularity of ascent the train must go away up to the head of the deep indentations, and skirt the outermost rim of the headlands. There are no tunnels, except the semblance made by the long snow sheds; few deep cuttings or bridges. It is simply a winding trail, accomplishing, by many and devious turnings, the required ascent of 217 feet to the mile, shown by a straight line on the profile from the Arkansas plains to the summit of the pass, and down again to the valley of the Tomich on the western side. Sometimes you can look out of the window at two or three tracks below and two or three more above—the steps you have come and those which remain; but intervening links are invisible, and you wonder how you are to attain those successively higher levels. From one spot on the western slope six of these tracks are seen at once down the opening made by a great ravine which the road crosses and recrosses. This is a kaleidoscope of far-reaching views, changing with each moment, for your headlight turns to every point of the compass in its doubling; and while you admire the sky-kissed heights above, you may turn and tremble at the awful depths just below. It is a railway in mid-air.

Gems of Thought.

Be deaf to the quarrelsome and dumb to the inquisitive.

Do not be too generous with your temper. Keep it.

Contact with the world either breaks or hardens the heart.

The world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel.

Great things are not accomplished by idle dreams, but by years of patient study.

A thorough scholar carries a key with which to unlock every door to the mansion of knowledge.

Never condemn your neighbor unheard, however many the accusations against him; every story has two sides.

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