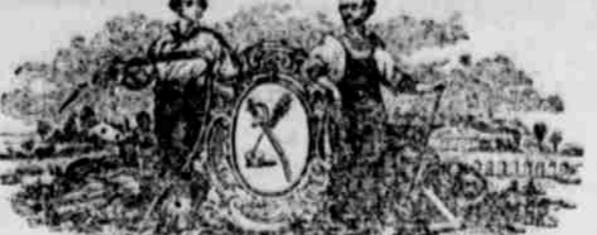
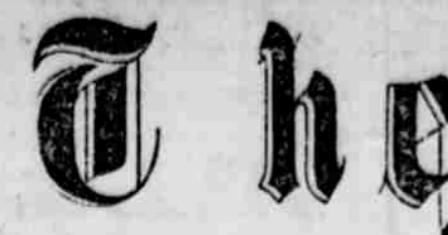


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NO. 38

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Meanwhile, Mordant stalked sullenly up stairs into his sister's pretty little sitting room, where the muslin curtains were fluttering to and fro in the delicious night wind, and the sofa was drawn into a little recess beside a table all littered with books and magazines, needle-cases and thimbles and the indispensable *dresses*, which two girls invariably collect around themselves in the course of a fine afternoon.

He threw himself recklessly down on the sofa and lit by the side table, of Kite's easement, shawl over him, as if jealous lost the soft eyes of the watching stars, that were just beginning to open the heavens, would witness the struggle that convulsed the motionless head.

"Katy," said the tremulous coo of the wild pigeon, Valentine's voice murmuring the two soft syllables with the coaxing accent of a child. And in the same instant she knelt down beside the sofa, her white dress sweeping over the crimson carpet in folds of translucent pearl, and I am thrown carelessly over the foil of the deceitful exchange shawl. Mordant's first impulse was to spring up and declare his independence; his second to lie still and let Fate manage the master's suit her capricious self. Some lay still, seemingly, experiencing a very singular and unique all-disagreeable sensation from the contact of the caressing arm.

No doubt, he was a treacherous hypocritical wretch; but, fair lady or chivalrous gentleman, don't I like the poor fellow too much, and you have been in precisely the same circumstances yourself. It is just possible—only, possibly, you know—that you might do the same thing. "Now, you are angry with me, Katy," pleaded the soft voice, "because I threw those flowers away! And you won't speak to me, and I know I deserve it, darling."

There was a moment's silence, as if Miss Valentine had expected some sort of response to her peevish protest. But she did not get any; after a brief pause, she went on:

"Indeed, Katy, I did not mean to give you, and I won't do it again. I am sorry for my ridiculous freak. If you suppose he was very angry, Katy! Do you think I ought to ask his pardon? But, then, you know, he didn't see me steal round the lawn, when that odious Alrich was gone, and pick up the roses again?"

He twisted a blade of pliant grass around the mossy stems, in place of a ribbon, and sauntered carelessly up the gravel walk.

All of a sudden he stopped. "Frank Aldrich's voice," he explained, biting his lips with vexation, as a weary pool of laughter floated through the purpling twilight from the open meadows beyond.

"What brings the puppy here, now, of all times and seasons in the world?"

"Hello, Jack!" said Alrich, "been sentimentalizing out in theadow! The ladies were just fretting over the chance of your taking cold."

Mordant's face brightened up—the Valentine did think of him sometimes.

"That is," pursued the relentless Aldrich, "poor, thoughtful sister Katy, said she was afraid you would have a cold, and Miss Bruce said nothing."

Mordant's countenance elongated again. But he stepped forward and laid the knot of moist roses on the folds of Valentine's white muslin dress, with few unmannerly words that nobody could understand.

"Flowers yet?" said Frank, suspiciously; "upon my word, Jack is getting prodigal."

Valentine looked curiously down at the cluster of pink buds, and then deliberately took them up and tossed them upon the lawn.

"Explain, if you please," said Frank compositely, while Mordant grew scarlet, and bit his lips until the blood started.

"There was a worm—horrid green worm—on one of the buds, haughtily said Valentine, shaking off one or two crimson petals that still adhered to her dress. I have a perfect horror of all such noxious insects."

"Do you hear that, Jack?" appealed Mr. Aldrich, lazily turning in his chair. "It is a pity you were so unfortunate in the selection of your floral offering."

But Mordant had left the room, Kate followed him the next minute.

"Dearest Jack, are you vexed with Valentine and Frank? They don't mean to annoy you, I'm sure—"

"Not vexed, dear," said Mordant speaking slowly and sadly—"only grieved. I am sorry Miss Bruce finds me disagreeable."

He went up stairs, while Katy hesitated a moment below.

"Life is better by himself," she said merrily. "Poor fellow, he's dreadfully in love, and I wish Valentine and Frank wouldn't tease him so."

"And she went down to gather

Valentine felt as if every vein throughout her whole frame were filled with molten fire—then she grew white and cold as marble statues. Life and strength seemed ebbing away from her, and for the first time in her life Valentine Bruce fainted away.

Katy Mordant quietly sprinkled scented water on the pallid flesh, and began to raise the white muslin curtains were fluttering to and fro in the delicious night wind, and the sofa was drawn into a little recess beside a table all littered with books and magazines, needle-cases and thimbles and the indispensable *dresses*, which two girls invariably collect around themselves in the course of a fine afternoon.

He threw himself recklessly down on the sofa and lit by the side table, of Kite's easement, shawl over him, as if jealous lost the soft eyes of the watching stars, that were just beginning to open the heavens, would witness the struggle that convulsed the motionless head.

She would have cheerfully fasted all day long sooner than enter the presence of the tall, slender, but wistful youth who dressed her in his coat, and she knew it. Now would take a great advantage of her helplessness. "On with me," said she, "you are a man, make him your friend. You can make it so, however, by accustoming me to it."

The trustworthy man may be described as a man of good judgment. He does not jump at conclusions, he is not a frivolous man, *however* thoughtful. However, over a man's jacket he laid his hands, and looked at it all around. He was a principal or overseer, he was seen through a window, he was a very rich gentleman. He had no motive to talk a great deal. He is a mysterious man, in truth in habits of body, but also of mind. He is not a passion man; nor is he a man by nature, he is overcome by it; grace. He is a strong man, not a plotter, a schemer. He does not possess regular ways, he may be called upon, and he is quickly as despatched, with a brief, well-aimed snarl.

"Valentine," he said gently, "was I doing last night, or did I hear you say that you loved me?" "Oh, my darling, tell me that it was no dream?"

She came slyly to his arms, and nestled there like a blushing lass, voices, yet happy. Still he was not contented.

"I want to hear it from your own lips, again, Valentine. Never doubt, don't shrink away so timidly, however, me."

"What shall I say?" she murmured, timidly raising her soft eyes to his face.

"Tell me that you love me."

Sweeter than the fall of morning dews is that first kiss of true love, when you expect it least. You are blushing yet again, Valentine. Never doubt, don't shrink away so timidly, however, me."

"Now, you are angry with me, Katy," pleaded the soft voice, "because I threw those flowers away! And you won't speak to me, and I know I deserve it, darling."

There was a moment's silence, as if Miss Valentine had expected some sort of response to her peevish protest. But she did not get any; after a brief pause, she went on:

"Indeed, Katy, I did not mean to give you, and I won't do it again. I am sorry for my ridiculous freak. If you suppose he was very angry, Katy! Do you think I ought to ask his pardon? But, then, you know, he didn't see me steal round the lawn, when that odious Alrich was gone, and pick up the roses again."

He twisted a blade of pliant grass around the mossy stems, in place of a ribbon, and sauntered carelessly up the gravel walk.

"You won't forgive me, Katy?"

"Frank Aldrich's voice," he explained, biting his lips with vexation, as a weary pool of laughter floated through the purpling twilight from the open meadows beyond.

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## Select Poems.

### Between The Lights.

A tall, blue-eyed girl, with loose brown curly flowing from her face, a necklace of amber brightness, and a slender throat, white and smooth as mother of pearl—this was Valentine Bruce, as she sat by the open French window, dreamily watching the sunset melt into open billows of the light.

And Col. Mordant smoked his despairing cigar in the fragrant shadows of the shrubbery, and wondered what fortunate mortal might be fated to buy Valentine's wedding ring, and pay her millinery bills, and be her humble slave and servant through life.

Col. Mordant tossed his cigar among the leaves that skirted the lawn, and began to select a cluste

r of expensive roses and heedless of the thorns that pierced his unaccustomed fingers.

"She likes it over," he soliloquized, "and moss roses are certainly the prettiest flowers that grow. I will win a smile from those velvet lips of hers again."

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All of a sudden he stopped.

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