THE MONTROSE DEMOCRAT.

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A FORGOTTEN VALENTINE.

I. THE MESSENGER WHO BORE IT,

And who never delivered it. Perhaps it would have been too much to expect of him that he should do so; too much to expect that little packet, carelessly taken and thrust away among others, would ever enter into his head again. At any rate it did not. He was a young man still, though he had been for some years a widower; and he had fallen in love, and was on the way to learn his fate.

It cannot be flattering to a young lady, if she knows it, that her suitor should be capable of taking thought for any one beside herself; but certainly Sir Hugh Rainham tried to believe that he was making his own happiness altogether the first consideration. There was the well being of his little girl to be thought of; and what did he know about bringing up little girls? He had heard sensible people say, and he was ready enough now to accept the dictum, that the wisest thing a man in his position could do would be to marry again; wisest both for his own future and his child's. He said this to himself as he stood in Evelyn Neville's drawing room, hat in hand, waiting, looking out upon the bare branches which were soon to be green again, and wondering, in a desultory fashion, if this February day would bring him another spring time or only the desolate branches, the dead leaves whirling about, and the cold sky beyond. He had not long to wait. When she came into the room, and that thrill went through his heart which the presence of one we love alone can bring, it must have left some mark upon his face; for she knew why he had come, and in a few arguments had decided her answer. He was rich; but she did not care so much about that, not knowing what it was to be anything else; he was Sir Hugh Rainham; but she didn't care for that either, her pride being of another sort; he was good, generous and devoted—these things she did care for. He loved her; and he came on a day when that same pride of hers was smarting under a sense of neglect.

In the few seconds allowed her before he spoke, Evelyn made her decision. She had thought that he knew, and was jealous of her friendship with that cousin Frank, whom she had fancied might one day be nearer than a cousin. But that was over. The cousins had kept up a childish habit of exchanging valentines; and to day there was nothing from him, while her own had gone as usual. That was the humiliating part of it. If she had broken through the custom, it would have been well; but that he should be the first! and when, too, he had given her cause to expect that his would be no ordinary valentine! Here, within her reach, was the means of punishing him; at any rate, of letting him know that she did not care.

Evelyn listened to Sir Hugh with a forced attention; but he knew nothing of that. When he spoke of his little girl, falteringly, she roused up and saw the strong earnestness and anxiety in the man's face; and, strange to say, this touched her more just then than any passionate lover's pleading from his lips would have done. She turned towards him suddenly, and put her hand into his, and said, speaking of the small Cecilia,—

"She shall be very dear to me, and precious; I will care for her, as much as you could desire."

And when Sir Hugh had left her, she did not repent. It is true that there came upon her a certain sense of being bound; of having done what could not be undone and that half rebellious desire to be free, which is almost always inseparable from an act that seals one's fate. And then the drawing room was rather lonely; the trees outside the window got a ghostly look, and seemed to wrap themselves up tighter as the fog gathered round them; and—altogether, she thought she would just go and tell her brother, by way of convincing herself that the thing was finally settled.

When she told him, he lifted up his eyebrows and stared at her.

"It is true? You look as if it were. Rather sacred, and that sort of thing. Not that there is anything to be sacred about; only I suppose it's proper. Hem! I might have thought of Frank Neville; but this is wiser."

She bit her lip, but never answered him. She wished he had not said that about Frank, and she didn't like the word "wiser." What had wisdom to do with it?

She started from her sleep that night, with a mist before her eyes and a great throbbing at her heart, for Frank's voice was in her ears. Would he care?

But what use to ask, now that it was too late? And that it was too late no one knew better than herself; for to her, having once decided publicly as it were, change would have been impossible.

And on her wedding day she was to Sir Hugh a radiant princess, far above him, stooping to crown him with the blessing of her love. Any one who had seen him that day might have doubted its being altogether, or even very much for his daughter's sake that he took this step.

"I have reason to be grateful," he said to his new brother in law, when the speechifying was over, and the bride was going away to change her dress.

George Neville looked at her and nodded.

"She's a good girl enough; a little self willed, perhaps; but then she always had her own way."

"And will have it still, I hope," said sir Hugh. "If I don't make her happy, I shall deserve to be a miserable man all my life."

In years to come he recalled the speech, and wondered whether some strange misgiving had moved him to utter it.

Just then Frank Neville was saying to Evelyn, "So you did not think me worth an answer!"

She was passing through the dense throng towards the door, and she never faltered or raised her head. No one knew that the words fell upon her with a sudden chill, like a cold hand grasping her heart. She had seen her cousin amongst the guests, and knew that he was miserably ill, but she had been too much occupied to think about that.

"What do you mean, Frank?"

"O, not much. Valentines don't require answers in a general way; but I think you might have given me a few words last February. However, you'll keep my secret. No one knows it but you, unless it is your husband. What's the matter, Evelyn? You look as if you don't understand."

"I don't."

"You must have had it. I missed the post over night, and gave it to Rainham, there, as I knew he would see you the next day."

"To—my husband?"

"Yes; I'll ask him—"

"Frank," she said, with a heavy hand on his arm, "forget all this. Never speak of it—for my sake."

He looked at her with a perplexed expression of inquiry, but he saw that she was white and flurried, and gave up the point.

"Well, we have always been friends; have we not? I would ask you yet for your good wishes, as you have mine; but the doctors say there's something amiss here," touching his chest; "and I may not live to—never mind! God bless you, Evelyn!"

II. ITS MARK ON THE YEARS TO COME.

Sir Hugh brought his wife home; and his hair was not gray, neither had any premature wrinkles marked his face. To his servants there appeared no change in him, either for better or for worse. He was just the same grave, silent, rather deliberate master they remembered. They did think, indeed, that he was dreadfully polite to his lady; but perhaps that was proper—before servants.

Sir Hugh, taking Evelyn in the drawing rooms, which he had caused to be altered and brightened for her, turned and said to her, "Welcome home."

And as he said it, the memory of his own dreams of that home stung him so bitterly that he half put out his arms to take into them the Evelyn he had once known. But she never saw the movement; and would not have heeded it if she had seen. She passed on into the room, the brilliant light of which seemed to hurt sir Hugh's eyes, for he put his hand over them suddenly; and for a moment he stood at the door, irresolute; then closed it gently, and went to see after this little girl.

That was natural enough they said,—those gossips down stairs who were always on the watch. But why didn't he take his new wife with him? And why did he stay with the child, hour after hour, till none of the evening remained? The first evening, too! Above all, when the household had retired, and all was quiet, did a tall, slight figure, which rustled a little as it passed, go into the nursery and kneel down beside the sleeping child and sob?

The nurse saw, for she was not asleep, as my lady fancied; and she was not likely to keep it to herself, either. These and such things] were puzzling. At first they formed a constant source of whisperings and shakings of wise heads; but gradually the gloss of newness wore away from them; the dull days swept on, and something of the grimness of the stone heads that guarded the sweep of steps at the hall door seemed to have crept into the house. It was so still and silent; so monotonous. But for the small Cecilia, it would have been unutterably dismal. But she was a child, and had childish ways, which remained unchecked. She was quite young enough to take very kindly to the new mamma, who was so beautiful and so good to her.

"Not like nurse said she would be,—ugly and cross," she said to her favorite playfellow, "but good. I think she could have brought the little princess to life again, as well as the fairy did. You never saw such eyes in your life as she has got; just like the pool under the willows, where we are not to go, Charlie you know; down, as if you couldn't ever see the bottom; ever so deep. And she kisses me, too."

To which the boy replied with decision, that she couldn't be a fairy in that case for fairies never kissed any body; it wasn't lucky, that was unless they were wicked fairies. And it was all very well now, but when Cecil married him, he shouldn't allow her to kiss anybody.

By and by, however, as Cecil grew older she used to wonder in her wise little head what made her father and mother, when they were alone, talk to each other if they did talk, so like "company." That was her idea of it. She jumped up from the piano one day, and waltzed round to the footstool at Lady Rainham's feet, with a sudden thought that she would find out.

"Well," said Evelyn, looking at the pursed up lips, which evidently had a question upon them, "what's the matter? Is your new music lesson too hard?"

"My new music lesson is—is a fidgety crank," said Cecil, hesitating for an expression strong enough; "but it's not that. I was just wondering why you and papa—"

Sir Hugh let his book fall with a sudden noise, and went out of the room, passing the child, but taking no notice of her.

"Why you and papa," went on Cecil, reflectively, "are so odd, like grand visitors. When there's any one here I know I have to sit still, and not tumble my frock, nor cross my feet; but when there's no one it's different.'

"Your papa and I are not children," said Lady Rainham. "Grown up people must be steady, Sis."

"Then I don't want to be grown up. And I'm sure, quite sure, that I'll never be married, if one is to do nothing but sit—sit all day long, and have no fun."

Lady Rainham bent down to kiss the resolute lips that uttered this bold decision, and then her face grew sad. There were times when even to her pride the life she led seemed almost too hard to bear,—times when she was mad enough to think she would tell Sir Hugh that the act which stamped him in her eyes as base and dishonored was no secret from her, as he doubtless believed it to be. But she could not do it. It seemed to her as if the consciousness that she knew would only make him more contemptible in his own eyes as well as in hers. It would be to widen the gulf, and make what she was able to bear now utterly intolerable. For she never doubted that the purport of the letter was known to him, and he had suppressed it for his own ends. And the poor boy who wrote it was dead. There was the great mischief of it all. If he had been living and well, so tender a halo might not have rested over the past; and all in the past connected with him; so bitter a resentment might not have been nursed in silence against the wrong which her husband had done them both. But Frank had lived but a few months after her wedding and she never saw him again. He was dead, and she had killed him—no, not she but sir Hugh.

She was thinking such thoughts one day when something made her look up, and she met sir Hugh's eyes fixed upon her. There was so peculiar an expression in them that she could not prevent a certain proud, antagonistic inquiry coming into her own. He went towards her with his book open in his hand. He bent down and put his finger on a line in the page, drawing her attention to it.

"How much the wife is dearer than the bride.' This struck me rather, that's all," he said, and went away.

Evelyn sat on by the window, but the book dropped from her fingers, and she covered her face. What did he mean? If he had only not gone away then!

"How could he do that one thing?" she said to herself. "He meant the line as a reproach to me. And I would have loved him—is it possible that I do love him, in spite of it. And I so weak and false? I want so much to comfort him sometimes that I half forget, and am tempted. But I never will—I never must. I used to be strong, I shall be strong still."

And so the same front of icy indifference met sir Hugh day by day and year by year, and he knew none of her struggles. But he wrapped himself up more and more in his books and his problems and writings. New MSS. began to grow out of old ones for he had always been given to thorship, and the accumulation of papers on various subjects. In these days a little fairy used to come in from time to time with a pretense of arranging them for him. She would open and shut the study door with a great show of quietness, seat herself on a big chest which was full of old papers, and in which she meant to have a glorious rummage some day; and begin folding up neat little packages; stitching loose sheets together; reading a bit here and there, and looking up now and then with a suggestive sigh till he would lay aside his work, and declare that she was the plague of his life. This was the signal always for the forced gravity to disappear from Cecil's face; for her to jump up, radiant and gleeful, and just have one turn round the room—to shake off the cobwebs, as she said.

"But you know you couldn't do without me, and I do help very much. What do you know about stitching papers together? And you are a most ungrateful man to say I am a plague; only you don't mean it. I wonder what you'll do when I am married."

"Married!" echoed sir Hugh. "Go and play with your last new toys, and don't talk nonsense."

But the word worried him, and made him thoughtful. When he came to consider it, the fairy was no longer exactly a child, though she was as merry as a young kitten. He did a little sum on his fingers in sheer absence of mind, and found out that in a few weeks she would be eighteen.

It was twelve years since he went, that February, day, to plead her cause and his own with Evelyn Neville. He used to go now sometimes to the window and look out, and remember the day when he had stood at the other window watching bare branches and wondering about his future. He knew it not. If only he could find out why it was thus. What had changed her all at once, on her wedding day, from the very moment, as it seemed to him, that she became his wife?

Sir Hugh pushed his hair away from his forehead and sighed. He was getting gray by this time, but then he was past forty, and Evelyn, his wife, must be two and thirty at least. It occurred to him that he had noticed no alteration in her. She was as beautiful as ever, with the beauty of a statue that chills you when you when you touch it. He thought he would look at her that evening, and see if he could trace no change, such as there was in himself.

He did look, when the room was brilliant with soft light, and she sat languidly turning over a book of engravings with Cecil. They formed a strange contrast; the cold, proud, indifferent beauty of the one face and the eager animation of the other. The girl's one hand rested on Lady Rainham's shoulder, caressingly, for the tie between these two was more like the passion of a first friendship than the affection of mother and daughter. Cecil suddenly pointed down the page and said something in a whisper, and Lady Rainham turned and looked at her with a smile.

As he saw that look, just such a thrill went through Sir Hugh's heart as he had felt when she came to him twelve years ago to give him his answer. No, time had not done her so much wrong as it had to himself, and there was one hope in which she had never disappointed him—her care for his daughter.

"For her sake," he said that night when Cecilia was gone, "I am always grateful to you."

But he did not wait for any reply. He never did. Perhaps he might not have got one if he had; or perhaps he thought the time had gone by for any change to be possible.

Lady Rainham looked from the window the next morning, and saw Cecil under a tall laurel, reading something. And the sun had come out; there was a twittering of birds in the shrubbery, and the sky was all flecked with tiny white clouds. It was Valentine's Day, and Lady Rainham knew that the girl was reading over again the one which Sir Hugh had handed her with such a troubled face at the breakfast table. What did that unquiet expression mean; and why did Cecil, when she saw it, look from him to herself, Lainham, fold up her packet hurriedly and put it away?

It meant, on Sir Hugh's part, that he knew what it was and didn't like it; that he could not help thinking of his life, doubly lonely without the child. But this never occurred to his wife. Presently some one joined Cecil in the laurel walk, and though of course Lady Rainham could not hear their words, she turned instinctively away from the window.

Cecil was saying just then, "No, it is not likely. Who should send me valentines? They're old fashioned, vulgar, out of date. Charlie, mind, I won't have any more."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm serious now—for some reason or other they don't like my having them," said Cecil, motioning towards the house. "And it's a shocking thing to say, but I'm sure there's something between papa and Lady Rainham—some misunderstanding, you know. I'm sure that they are dreadfully fond of each other, really; but it's all so strange; I do so want to do something that would bring it right, and—I shall have nothing to say to you till it is right."

"Cecil!"

"I mean it. I am a sort of a go-between; no, not that exactly; but they both care for me so much. They don't freeze up when I'm there. I cant fancy them without me; it would be terrible."

"But, Cecil, you promised—"

"No, I didn't. And if I had I should not keep it of course. That is, you would not want me of course; that is, you wouldn't want me to. It would kill papa to lose me, and as to Lady Rainham, why I never cared for any one so much in all my life. I didn't know it was in me till she woke it up. You remember what I used to say about her eyes. They are just like that; like a beautiful deep pool; all dark, you know, until it draws you close and makes you want to know so much of what is underneath."

Here Lady Rainham came to the window again, but the two figures had gone out of the laurel walk; and she saw them no more.

In the afternoon Cecil went as usual to her father's study, but he was stooping over a book and did not notice her. He was, in fact, thinking the thought that had troubled him in the morning, but Cecil fancied he was busy and looked round to see what mischief she could do. It flashed upon her that here was a fine opportunity for the old chest, and so she seated herself on the carpet and began the rummage. Presently Sir Hugh, hearing the rustle of papers, looked around.

"I should like to know who is to be my fairy Order," he said, "amongst all that mess."

"I will, papa. I shall give a tap with my wand, and you will see it all come straight. But look here. Isn't this to mamma? It has never been opened, and it's like—a valentine."

Sir Hugh looked at the large "Miss Neville" on the envelope, and knitted his brows in a vain effort to remember anything about it. He couldn't. It was very strange. He fancied he knew the writing, but yet could not tell whose it was—certainly not his own—nor recollect anything about the packet. He considered a little and then said, "you had better take it to her."

He took a pen and wrote on the cover, "Cecil has just found this amongst my old papers. I have no idea how or when it came into my possession, neither can I make out the hand, though it doesn't seem altogether strange. Perhaps you can solve the mystery."

III. ITS MESSAGE—AFTER MANY DAYS.

It was in verse, as Frank's valentines always had been; halting, and with queer rhymes and changes of measure. It was full of the half-humorous tenderness of quiet friendship; and it ended with a hope that she would make "old Hugh" happier, than his first wife did; that was, if she accepted him; and with a demand for her congratulations upon his own approaching marriage; since he was "the happiest fellow alive," and couldn't keep the news from her, though it was a secret from all beside.

And the evening grew old; the white flecked sky turned colder, and the moon came out. But Lady Rainham sat with this voice from the dead in her hand, motionless; full of humiliation and remorse. And she was thinking of many years of bitterness, and sorrow, and pride; and of a heavy sacrifice to a myth, for she had never loved him. And her husband—whom she did love—whom she had so wronged—how was she to atone to him?

By and by the door opened and Cecil stole in. And she saw Lady Rainham's face turned towards her with the moonbeams lighting it, and thought she had never seen anything so beautiful in her life.

"Mamma," she said softly, "why don't you come down? We are waiting, papa and I; and it's cold up here."

"I will come," said Lady Rainham; but her voice was strange. Cecil knelt down beside the chair and drew her mother's arm around her neck.

"How cold you are! Dear mamma, is anything the matter? Cannot I comfort you?"

Lady Rainham bent down and held her in a close embrace.

"My darling, you do always. I cannot tell whether I want comfort now or not. I am going down down to your father, and Cecil, I must go alone—I have something to say."

She went into the drawing room, straight up to where her husband sat listlessly in his chair at the window. He started when he saw her, and said something hurriedly about ringing for lights, but she stopped him.

"It will be better thus, for what I have to say. Hugh, I have come to ask your forgiveness."

Sir Hugh did not answer. The speech took him by surprise, and she had never called him Hugh before since their marriage. He had time enough to tell himself that it was only a mockery, and would end in the old way.

But standing there with Frank's letter in her hand, she told him all, not sparing herself, and then asked if he could ever forgive her. She was not prepared for the great love which answered her; which had lived unchanged through all her coldness and repulses; and which drew her to him closer now perhaps than it might have done if her pride had never suffered under these years of wretchedness.

Cecil never knew exactly what had happened; but when her father put his arm around her and called her his blessing, she looked up at him with an odd sort of consciousness that in some way or other the old valentine found in her rummage amongst his papers had to do with the change she saw. And it was her doing. So she made up her wilful mind straightway to exult and triumph over the fact to poor Charlie; and then, if he wanted to send her another next year—why, after a proper amount of teasing and suspense, which was good for him and kept him in order, she would perhaps say that he might.

—A number of boot blacks were arrested in New York for violating the Excise law. They polished boots for 25 cts. and gave drinks of whiskey to their customers from small bottles which they had about them.

—An Irish girl at play on Sunday, was accosted by the priest, "Good morning daughter of the devil." She meekly replied, "Good morning father."

For the Democrat.

A History of the Great Struggle in America between Liberty and Despotism.

After the lapse of one hundred years precisely, as is found by unrolling the scroll of history, the great drama of the revolution of 1776 is now being repeated in America. The only variation in the scenes, is the transferring of the British Parliament of that era to the Capital of the United States in the District of Columbia. In 1765 the parliament of Great Britain proclaimed itself sovereign over the colonies in all cases whatsoever, and that "the Americans shall obey implicitly all laws made by the parliament, or they shall enjoy no rights or privileges at all." The people of Massachusetts were declared soon after to be in a state of riot and rebellion, and troops were ordered there to aid in preserving the peace. The answer of the Massachusetts assembly to Lieut. Gov. Hutchinson's message on a riot at Gloucester, will exhibit the similarity of the scenes at these two periods of time:

"May it please your Honor, when complaints are made of riots and tumults, it is the wisdom of government to inquire into the real causes of them. If they arise from oppression, a thorough redress of grievances will remove the cause. It cannot be expected that a people accustomed to the freedom of the English Constitution, will be patient while they are under the despotic hand of tyranny and arbitrary power; they will discover their resentment in a manner which will naturally displease their oppressors, and in such a case the severest laws and most vigorous execution will be to little purpose.

"A military force, if posted among the people without their express consent, is itself one of the greatest grievances, and threatens the total subversion of a free Constitution, much more, if designed to execute a system of arbitrary power, to exterminate the liberties of the country.

"The Bill of Rights passed immediately after the revolution, expressly declares that 'the raising and keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, without the consent of Parliament, is against law,' and we take occasion to say with freedom, that the raising and keeping a standing army within this province in time of peace without the consent of the General Assembly, is against law.—Such an army must be designed to subjugate the people to arbitrary measures; it is a most violent infraction of their natural and constitutional rights; it is an unlawful assembly, of all others the most dangerous and alarming, and every instance of its actually restraining the liberty of any individual, is a crime which which infinitely exceeds what the law intends as a riot.

"*Resolved*, By the people of Massachusetts, that it is better to risk our lives and fortunes in the defence of our rights than to die by piecemeal in slavery.

"*Resolved*, That a standing army in this colony in time of peace, without the consent of the sovereign the people of the same, is an invasion of their natural rights, as well as of those which they claim as free-born Englishmen, confirmed by Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights as settled at the revolution [of 1688], and by the charter of the province.

"*Resolved*, That a standing army is not known as a part of the British Constitution in any of the king's dominions, and every attempt to establish it has been deemed a dangerous innovation, manifestly tending to enslave the people.

"*Resolved*, That whoever has represented to his Majesty's ministers that the people of this colony in general, or the town of Boston in particular, were in such a state of disobedience and disorder, as to require an army to be sent here, is an avowed enemy to this colony, and to the nation in general, and has by such representation endeavored to destroy the liberties of the people here, and that mutual harmony and union between Great Britain and the colonies, so necessary to the welfare of both. And this house cannot but express their deep concern that too many clearly avow the most rancorous enmity against the free part of the British Constitution, and are indefatigable in their endeavors to render the monarchy absolute, and the administration arbitrary in every part of the British empire."

At another meeting it was Resolved—

"That the use of the military power to enforce the creation of the laws, is in the opinion of this house, inconsistent with the spirit of a free constitution and the very nature of government. An independent military tends to the utter overthrow of the civil power, and is the bane of all free States, and in consequence thereof, the ancient rights of the nation are invaded, and the greatest part of the most precious and established liberties of Englishmen are utterly distroyed.

"That the depriving the colonies of their constitutional rights may be fitly compared to the dismembring the natural body, which will soon affect the heart, that it would be nothing unexpected for us to hear that those very persons who have been so active in robbing the colonies of their natural rights, have also delivered