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## A Birthday Present.

HOW A HUSBAND DUTIFULLY TOOK HIS WIFE'S ADVICE UPON ITS MERIT.

"Hither, my ownest," the husband Unto his wife did say :  
"Thou knowest to-morrow is thy Dear Cousin Flo's birthday. Ye have e'en as sisters been, And I were both just and pleasant. That we on her shoul'd now confer A handsome birthday present." 'Twas at her house I first met thee, And in the hand I sought She lent unto me, and said truly Girls in her place do not. So forth to the store of Tiffany, From counter or from shelf A fitting present to select. Jewel, or bronze or delft ; And let it be such gift as thou Wouldst choose for thine own self ; On such occasion one should not Be covetous of pelf.

III.

Forth fared the husband and the wife To the store of Tiffany. When she had heard her husband's word An angry wife was she ! "He hath thought eno'," she said, "of Flo. But never thought of me. He knoweth, or he ought to know, If he knoweth anything, That the dress I wear was worn threadbare. When I had it turned this spring. When at the Easter-tide the theme Of hats I dared o' brough, He said, "You may, but in a way Of infinite reproach, My references to expenditure Of d. lara—er—a of dimes— Are not with gloomy lectures on The value of our times. And yet, in spite of his complaints, When it is Cousin Flo's birthday, To whom a birth ay gift he'd give He can find cash no."

IV.

"He should have known," the wife went on, With a sardonic grin, "Not only I Flo's cousin am But in a sense her twin. Her birth and mine are on one leaf Of the family Bible—rit : My birthday's on the same day as hers, But he does o' think of it. Satin and lace, and brocade fair, Or dead gold jewelry. To his Flo's thing, but anything Is good enough for me!"— In such ingrate mood she came To the store of Tiffany.

V.

"We grosser mortals cannot judge 'Twix diamonds and 'twen paste." The husband said unto his wife ; "And hence on woman's taste Impish reliance in such things As these must ye be placed. Sit down, my dear, selection make At it, and you'll be surprised Of any pretty article In show case or on shelf. Care not what the price may be Or what the article ; An it please thine eve, have it put by And I will foot the bill."

VI.

A fiendish thought was there in wife's heart, And she smiled as if in glee, As they brought her there all that was fair In the store of Tiffany. "These diamond earnings," said her lord, Seem handsome unto me." "Diamonds," said she, "are worn no more In the best society." "Fair is this in the Orient pearls," "Tis pretty, without doubt, But I read in the last Sunday World That pearls were going out." "Goodly to see these pearls be." "John, opals do not wash ; And they only wear coral jewelry In the wilds of far Oshkosh. No woman that respects herself Wears costly jewels now ; She leaves their use to the parvenues And the Bowery maids, I trow. An I had my choice of all the store For my own self, I wis No article in it would more Suit with my taste than this."

VII.

"What?" said the lord, reluctantly, "Perchance you're satisfied, But as a gift would not this look, In the poet's language snide?" She beat the pavement of the store With an impatient toe ; "What's good enough for me," she said, Isn't good enough for Flo?" Her husband marked an angry flush On her round cheek come and go ; "I did not mean that, Louise, dear ; You should not answer so. Ho, said she, in a package do Me up this article." Send it to-day to that address." The salesman said, "I will," And the husband got back some change Out of a five dollar bill.

VIII.

The wife has hardly reached her house When at the door she sees A wagon, the superscription Whereof is Tiffany's. They give to her a parcel small, She tears the paper away, Within's a card, "To my dear wife, On her twenty-third birthday." She opens the casket with trembling hand, And it to her eyes doth show, The two pony halpeny article She had picked out for Flo. Which she had sworn beyond return In the moment of her go ! Her dark eyes filled with tears, for breath A moment she did catch, And gazing on her husband's gift, She softly said, "The wrrrrrrrrrretch!!!!"

—New York World.

## NANNIE.

I cannot set down in so many words just when or how it came to be understood between my partner, John Stillman, and myself that I was to marry his daughter, Nannie, when she was old enough. I have a vague impression that she was in long clothes at the time we first talked of her.

Her mother died when she was a little girl, and old Mrs. Stillman took her home to the family house at Owl's Corner, one of the prettiest little villages I ever had the good fortune to see. But Nannie was eighteen when I first met her as a woman, and this was the scene of our meeting.

John had sent for me to come to Owl's Corner on a certain July day, promising to drive over to the station and meet me, as my elderly legs covered the ground but slowly. We had retired from busi-

ness, rich men both, some five years before and corresponded regularly. But I had been abroad, and this was my first visit to Owl's Corner in ten years. I remembered Nannie as a romping child, fond of swinging on the gates, climbing up grape-arbers, and imperiling her neck fifty times a day, John always saying on each occasion :

"She's a little wild, but she'll get over that."

I waited at the station for half an hour; then, seeing no sign of John, I started to walk home. It was midday and fearfully hot, and when I had accomplished half the distance I turned off the road and started through a grove that gave me a longer walk, but thick shade. I was resting there on a broad stone, completely hidden by the bushes on every side, when I heard John's voice:

"Where have you been?" There was such dismay and astonishment in the voice that I looked up in surprise, to find that he was not greeting me, but a tall, slender girl coming toward him. "Such a sight! She was dark and beautiful, dressed in a thin dress of rose pink, faultless about the face and throat, but from the waist down, clinging to her, one mass of the greenest, blackest, thickest mud and water.

"In the duck pond," she answered with a voice as clear and musical as a chime of bells. "Don't come near me. You are enough to wear a man into his grave!"

"There, don't scold," was the coaxing reply ; "little Bob Ryan fell in face down. It did not make any material difference in his costume, but I was afraid he would smother, so I waded in after him. The water is not over two feet deep, but the mud goes clear through to China, I imagine. It is rather a pity about my new dress, isn't it?"

"A pity!" roared John ; "you'll come to an untimely end some day with your freaks. As if there was nobody to pick a little brat out of the duck pond but you!"

"There was actually nobody else about. There, now, don't be angry. I'll go up to the house and put on that bewitching white affair that came from New York last week, and be all ready to drive over to the station with you, at what time?"

"About three. Lawrence is coming on the 2:10 train."

And I had come on the 12:10. This accounted for the failure to meet me. I kept snug in my retreat until John and Nannie were well on their way homeward, wondering a little how many young ladies in my circle of friends would have so recklessly sacrificed a new dress to pick up a beggar's brat out of the mud.

When I, in my turn reached the house, John was on the porch, waiting for Nannie's reappearance. He gave me a most cordial welcome, or rather a luncheon, called Nannie, his mother, and a man to go for my trunk, all in one breath, and seemed really rejoiced to see me.

I rather agreed with Walt as she stood in shy confusion before me, her eyes still misty, her sweet lips quivering. It was a sore wrench to give her up, but I was not quite an idiot, and I said gravely :

"But your father?"

"Yes, I know ; he'll make a real storm. But then his storms don't last long, and maybe you would tell him that you have changed your mind. You have, haven't you?"

"Yes; the last half hour has quite changed my matrimonial views."

I could not help smiling, and the next moment two arms encircled my neck, a warm kiss fell upon my cheek, and Nannie cried :

"You are a perfect darling, a perfect darling, and I shall love you dearly all my life."

So when I lost her love I gained it. She fitted away presently, and I gave myself a good mental shaking up, and concluded my fool's paradise would soon have vanished if I had undertaken to make an "old lady" out of Nannie.

John's wrath was loud and violent. He exhausted all the vituperative language in the dictionary, and then sat down panting and furious.

"Come, now," I said, "what is the objection to young Bruce? Is he poor?"

"No, confound him! He inherits his grandfather's property, besides what his father will probably leave him."

"Is he immoral?"

"I never heard so."

"What does all him, then?"

"Nothing, but I have set my heart on Nannie's marrying you."

"Well you see she has set her heart in another direction, and I strongly object to a wife who is in love with somebody else."

"What on earth sent the puppy home?"

"Love for Nannie, I imagine. Come, John, you won't be my father-in-law, for I will not marry Nannie if you are ever so tyrannical, but we can jog along as usual, the best of friends—look!"

I pointed out the window as I spoke.

On the garden walk, shaded by a great oak tree, Walter Bruce stood looking down at Nannie with love-lighted eyes. Her beautiful face, all dimpled with smiles and blushes, was lifted up to meet his gaze, and both her little hands were fast prisoned in his strong ones.

John looked. His face softened, his eyes grew misty, and presently he said :

"How happy she is, Lawrence."

"And we will not cloud her happiness, John," I answered. "This is right and fitting. Nannie is too bright a May flower to be wilted by being tied up to an old December log like me."

So when, half fearful, the lovers came in, they met only words of affection, and Nannie's face lost nothing of its sunshine.

She was the loveliest of brides a few months later, and wore the diamond parure I had ordered for my bride at her wedding. And she is the most charming little matron imaginable, with

Nannie all her life, but went off to Europe two years ago, when he came of age. They wanted to correspond but I forbade that. So he has turned up again."

"It was evident that John was terribly vexed, and I very soon shared his annoyance. Wait, a tall, handsome young fellow, improved, not spoiled by travel, just haunted the house.

He was generally off with Nannie as soon as he arrived, and blind to Mrs. Stillman's ill concealed coldness and John's sarcastic speeches about boys and pupies.

As for me, by the time my sleepy eyes were opened in the morning, Nannie had taken a long ride with Walt, was at the piano when I came into the room, and Walt was walking beside Nannie when the hour for our usual stroll arrived.

And the very demon of mischief possessed the girl. There was no sneak she was not inventing to imperil her life, riding, driving, boating, and I fairly shivered sometimes at the prospect of my nervous terrors when it would be my task to try to control this quicksilver temperament.

But one day, when I was in the summer house, a very rueful little maiden with a tear-stained face, came to my side.

"Walt is going away," said she.

"Indeed."

"Yes, and he says I'm a wicked flirt, with a chocking sob ; "I thought I would ask you about it."

"About what?"

"Our getting married. You know papa told me I was to marry you ages and ages ago."

"Yes."

"And I knew it was all right if he said so. But Walt says you must be a mif if you want a wife who is all the time thinking of somebody else. And you know I can't help it. Walt has been my friend ever since we were always together. And when he was in Europe papa wouldn't let me write to each other, but I kissed his picture every night and morning and wore his hair in a locket, and thought of him all the time. And he says you won't like it after we are married."

"Well, not exactly," I said dryly. You have to stop thinking of him then."

"I don't believe I ever can. And so I thought I'd tell you, and perhaps—perhaps you will tell papa we don't care about being married after all. I don't think I could ever be sedate and grave like an old lady, and of course I ought to be if I am to be an old man's wife."

"Of course."

"And I am so rude and horrid, I know I am not like nice city girls, and I am altogether hateful, but Walt don't care."

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