

The North Branch Democrat.

HARVEY SICKLER, Proprietor

"TO SPEAK HIS THOUGHTS IS EVERY FREEMAN'S RIGHT."—Thomas Jefferson.

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Select Story.

HE AND I.

"Candidly, do you believe in love at first sight, Amy?"
A young man asked the question, looking up from the novel he was reading. And a young girl, probably his cousin, blushed as she replied, "she did not know." I forgot what else passed. They were only fellow travelers in a railway-carriage. My friend, Mrs. Murray, who was taking me to her home, called my attention to some place of interest we were passing, and the young man resumed his book.

But the question recurred to me; and as I leaned back in my corner I tried to answer it for myself, and to solve a little mystery that puzzled me.
Three times had I met a gentleman, a handsome young man, tall, dark and listless. We had never spoken, but his notice of me had attracted my attention. At a ball he followed me about, changed color when our eyes met, but did not seek an introduction.

At a concert he had stared me almost out of countenance, yet gravely, almost respectfully.
At a picnic—the last time I had seen him—he was happy, laughing and talking till he saw me, when his manner became constrained, and in a few minutes he left the party.

There was a strange fascination in his large dark eyes, and I wondered if I should ever meet him again.

He must have had some reason for noticing me so strangely, for I was not pretty. No, no! It could not be love at first sight, could it?

We arrived at The Meadows late in the evening. Mrs. Murray introduced me to her daughter, Lydia, a lady some fifteen years older than myself. She was the only child at home. Mr. John was married and had the rectory. George, the eldest son, was traveling abroad.

Mrs. Murray and my mother had been school friends, but had been separated for years, and so were comparative strangers. They met again in society, and Mrs. Murray asked me to spend two or three months with her in the country, to recruit my strength after the fatigue of a London season.

The day after our arrival Lydia showed me over the house and grounds. Harold, Mr. John's eldest child, eight years old came with us.

The conservatory door was locked. Miss Murray left us to fetch the key. Harold remained talking.

"I shall have this horrid old place pulled down," he said, pulling at some ivy that clustered round the turret. He looked at me as though expecting an answer then resumed: "pa says, if he has it he shan't stay at the church. He shall pull this down; if he don't, I shall."

"But this is your uncle's place," said I.
"My uncle! He won't live long. My pa says Uncle George is a bad man, a wicked man. Don't you think he is a wicked man?"

"No," said I, though I know nothing of him. "Little boys—" I began impressively; but his aunt returned, and the conversation ended.

"The place would be very different if poor George were here," said Lydia sadly. "Does he never live here?" I inquired.
"Mrs. Murray looked at me keenly. 'Live here! No, never. He stays for a week or two sometimes.'"

"Never!" said Lydia, stooping to pick up a flower. "Have you not heard about him?"

"I shall not be a raven, and tell you—You will learn soon enough."

Harold was standing in the doorway looking back at us. He had large brown eyes, and something in them made me fancy I had seen him before, though I knew I had not.

So there was a secret in the family, some mystery about the eldest son. Perhaps I was wrong, but I did wish to find it out. I had been at The Meadows nearly a month before an opportunity occurred. Then I paid a visit to the rectory, taking my work, that I might spend the day there. Mrs. Murray, I fancied, got tired of having to entertain me, and Lydia liked to have some time to herself.

Mrs. John and I were friends, so could speak freely to each other.

"Are you engaged?" said Mrs. John.

"No," said I, fancying she alluded to an opal and diamond ring I always wore.
"Some girls are, so young. How old are you?"

"Eighteen. Not so very young."

"No, not so very young," said Mrs. John, meditatively. "I was only seventeen when I was engaged."

"That was very young to marry."

"O, I was more than that when I married. Mamma could not bear the idea of a second son, you know. It was not a good match then; but I always said I would marry for love. Now they are pleased enough; for poor George is really nobody only he keeps John out of the place at present. Eventually Harold must have the estate. It is entailed."

"But there is an older brother?" said I.
"To my husband? Yes; but since that affair of his he will never marry, and John; he comes next. Sad affair that! I always pity poor George."

Mrs. John said this very comfortably, in the same way one pities a tradesman for having to reduce the price of his goods, while rejoicing in the opportunity of buying them cheaply.

"Is he very unhappy?"
As I said that I hated myself for asking it. I know if I had been right (as some would say, "commonly honest") I should have declined to hear anything Lydia would not tell me. Like a good child I should have said, "Thank you, I must not listen. He would not like it;" but "misere!" as a French friend of mine used to exclaim, I am one of Eve's true daughters, and the temptation was irresistible. I yielded to curiosity.

"Well, yes," said Mrs. John, "for the world is not charitable. Of course we know the truth, and we don't really condemn him. But he takes it to heart (perhaps to conscience, and that is as bad), though it may be a shadow after all, it may be."
Mrs. John emphasized the last three words, and her straight lips again made a corresponding line to the faint straight eyebrows that met over her nose, and disappeared behind the set curls arranged on either side of her face.

"It is a pity he should mind a shadow—"
I spoke awkwardly, conscious of trespassing on a forbidden subject.

Mrs. John looked up at me. "I thought all the world knew his history," she said; "quite romantic it is, and sad. You know he was a surgeon. Before his father had this property left him by his brother, the boys were brought up to professions. My husband to the church, to take this living. George chose to be a surgeon, so he became one; and clever, too, I believe, very clever. Well, he had good expectations, so was in a good deal of society; and in the course of his practice met a young lady whom he loved; in fact, fell in love with. I supposed she returned the affection, for they were engaged (this was before I was married). Well, Miss Chester, Colonel Chester's daughter, was rich; at least, her father was rich; the estates were left by will in this way: if Colonel Chester died without boys, but leaving a daughter, that daughter might inherit; but if there was a son, all landed property was to go to the son, however young; and only some dower to be paid to Miss Chester. An unlucky kind of arrangement, wasn't it?—Well, Colonel Chester had but this one daughter till he married again; then he had one son. Well, that child was born after George was engaged to Miss Chester; and when it was a year, or perhaps eighteen months old, it became ill—some childish illness, and—the child died."

I echoed Mrs. John's interjection, "well?"
"Well! don't you see. George had attended it, was it not awkward? George had never been a favorite with the Colonel, and he became suspicious, and had his prescriptions looked at, and the matter judged by other physicians; for Colonel Chester was an old man, and mad at losing the child. They said it was right enough, quite right, medical men always hang together, you know, but the child had not died of any acute disease; it had died of an over-dose of medicine. It was, of course the chemist's fault, but—you see how it stands—awkward for poor George."

"He could not help it," said I.

"My dear, he was there three times a day to see the child (and Miss Chester), and the child died; the little child died. The world is not a charitable!"

"Nor are you," thought I; but I only said, "And Miss Chester?"

"Her father told George what he suspected of him. He, of course, gave her up on the spot. I don't know what became of her. George will never marry, impossible; but he wanders about like a ghost, and I pity him. It was a temptation for a young man without means—He had not succeeded to The Meadows then, you know. It was a great temptation."

"A little child!" said I.

Mrs. John seemed surprised and half-alarmed at the distress I could not help feeling, probably betraying so injudiciously of herself, she added: "It was awkward for him, very, and people will judge; and, my dear, the fact remains, whether it was the chemist or not," said Mrs. John, before taking up her baby from the sofa where it had been sleeping. "The fact remains," said Mrs. John, stroking baby's ruddy cheek and fat arm, "though babies live through a good deal, this little child died."

Two shadows fell across the window. Mrs. John had turned to take her baby to the nursery, and did not observe them till she was just leaving the room. Then she said, "Talk of an angel, and you are sure to see its wings!" She stood in the doorway a moment, and nodded and smiled before closing the door and retiring. Her husband entered the room by the window that opened to the lawn. After him came another gentleman. I looked up, and recognized the mysterious gentleman of the concert, the ball, and the picnic.

"Ah! Miss Christensen!" said Mr. John; "let me introduce you to my brother George. This young lady is at your house, George, with your mother."

Mr. Murray bowed, and his color changed as he watched me collect my work and materials, and prepare to leave the room.

"Pray, don't let me frighten you away," he said. "I shall be home soon."

They were such commonplace words, but my face crimsoned, and I was glad when Mrs. John came in. She was smiling most affectionately, and apparently had forgotten the conversation that I would have given anything not to have shared. She noticed my confusion, but did not know I had met him before; nor did she notice that his hand trembled when at parting he touched mine, "at it did. I know now whose eyes I had recognized when I saw Harold."

When I returned home, Mrs. Murray was expecting her son, for his man and luggage were there already.

"It is just like him," said Lydia; "he comes and goes like Will-o'-the-Wisp; perhaps you may induce him to stay a little longer this time."

Again I blushed.
"Did I offend you, dear?" said Lydia kindly, as she passed her arm round my shoulders, and we walked up and down the terrace together.

"No," said I, "not in the least; if I influence Mr. Murray at all, it will be to drive him away."

Then I told her of our meetings, but of course I was careful what I said. "He is very strange and moody at times, my dear; you must not notice him."

In the evening he came home, but he was not strange or moody, and during the whole six weeks he stayed I found him rather the reverse, pleasant, kind, considerate. He was always waiting on his mother, going about with Lydia, and rather avoiding me, still in a kind, gentlemanly way. So matters went on, till one evening I stood on the lawn with baby in my arms.

It was a glorious sunset; the brothers returned from their walk, and came to my side. Mr. George Murray had a rose bud in his hand, and held it to the child. The little thing laughed and talked to it in baby fashion, and stretched out her little hand to take it from him. Her hand touched his. He trembled, dropped the bud, and turned away. Mr. John was good-natured and, I believe, sincerely fond of his brother; he took the child from my arms, smiled sympathizingly at George, and ran into the house to his wife, who had been spending the whole day with us. Mr. George looked very handsome with the sunshine lurking in his soft glossy beard, the rest of his face in deep shadow from the broad brim of the felt hat he wore pressed close on his brow. I was sorry for him, but I did not dare break the silence, though it was awkward, and we were quite alone.

We came back to the house side by side; as we passed the drawing room window we heard Mrs. John's cold voice say precisely—
"Any one would think they were lovers!"

He looked keenly in my face, I am afraid a blush was there. He passed on to the library; and when I rose the next morning he was gone. Lydia, was distressed and out of spirits. We wandered together over the house and grounds, and walked with Mrs. Murray to the rectory, where she always spent the first days of George's absence. When we returned, I went with Lydia to her brother's room to put away the many pretty things she had arranged to welcome him when he came home.

"He had not stayed so long for years," said Lydia, as she disconsolately collected the pipes that had been scattered on a side-table. "I can't think what sent him away again so suddenly poor fellow!"

I did not speak; I dared not tell her Mrs. John's remark then. So I sat, idly looking from the window, and Lydia busied herself with the dressing table. There were some papers there, left all together just as they had been sorted out to take. Mr. George must have gone off in a hurry at last, and so have forgotten them. Lydia looked through them listlessly, saying, "Perhaps I must send them on?" Suddenly her hand stopped turning the crisp leaves, and an exclamation burst from her lips. I rose and looked over her shoulder. In her hand she held a small square paper, that might once have been a leaf in a sketch-book. On it a girl's head had been roughly drawn in pencil. The hair waved off the temples, the eyes looked up anxiously, pleadingly. The lips were silently apart. Round the throat a little ribbon was tied, and on the ribbon hung a small locket. Beneath the drawing the letters D. C. were written, and these two words, "Kyrle Eleison." It was not an artist's sketch; it was a drawing of a hand that loved. Lydia held up the sketch, and placed her finger on the looking-glass before us. The reflection was reproduced in the sketch. I turned away, for it was not my own reflection that I saw, and I was sorry to have stumbled on another of his secrets. But my heart bounded, and a new life seemed to come to my soul. Lydia put her arm around me and kissed me.

"My dear, a red rose; mild, a full, rich, crimson rose, from the second stallard in the large conservatory, and your long white dress."

It was Lydia that spoke; she had come to bid me good by for the afternoon. She was called from home, she said. I must excuse her and try to amuse myself. A bright bloom was on her cheek, and she looked quite young again, though she was dressed soberly in black with only a violet ribbon to relieve it. Those delicious hours of solitude, if solitude it could be called! No, no; it was life! new life! a happiness too great to realize; luxurious; a holy future, in a sweet uncertainty and shadowy brightness. One figure, one face, in a thousand reflections, precluded the idea of solitude. I was companioned by the future. The evening came, so quickly. I must dress for Lydia's return. The rose was plucked. I was fastening it in my hair when she came softly to my room. She had been crying, though evidently she tried to compose herself.

"My dear," she said, drawing me down

to the sofa at her side; "do you think we are responsible for the evil we unconsciously bring on others?"

"Certainly not," said I, my mind going back to George and his mistake.

She leaned her head upon my shoulder, and a tear dropped on my hand, as she whispered:

"I have done you a real wrong. I have been a Judas to you, and betrayed you by a kiss!"

I did not know myself or my weakness; actually I was ill. Mrs. Murray and Mrs. John thought I had taken cold. Lydia knew differently. She kept my secret and nursed me kindly. When I was recovering she told me it was Miss Chester's portrait I had seen. D. C. was not Dora Christensen, but Delicia Chester. It was my resemblance to Miss Chester that had brought me so much notice from Mr. Murray. I hated myself for the mistake, and my hatred only increased the evil. For weeks I lay ill at the Meadows.

Lydia would blame herself for showing me the portrait. But we both felt that there is a mystery in sequence—circumstance must follow circumstance. One link cannot be severed in the chain of fate. And the weary days of illness and convalescence passed on, and after a time my mother took me across the Channel to Dieppe. We were en route for Geneva, but I was weak, and we waited at Dieppe for a few days to rest. We used to watch the steamers come in. It was the autumn, and there were not a great many passengers. As the boat neared the shore the day before we intended to leave, I recognized a pair of dark eyes looking up at me.

Mr. George Murray was on board. I fainted. When I recovered Lydia was bending over me, and though we were in an open carriage in the public road, she kissed me as she said:

"Silly girl!"
We did not leave Dieppe that day. In the evening Lydia and I walked out together, to have a chat, she said, about old times; but that seemed scarcely her intention, for when we were alone together she was unusually silent. We were on the pier, I sat down to rest, and Lydia, with some unintelligible excuse, left me. I leaned against the parapet, watching a boat come in. The tide was dead ahead; the wind only a cross wind, so the task of bringing her in was not an easy one. It was only a fishing boat; four men were in it; each had an oar; still, as they neared the pier, fix at either side, each raised his hat and signed the cross upon his breast, and seemed to breathe a prayer.

"Do they lose or gain by that act?"
I started so when I heard the question. It was Mr. Murray who put it.

"They lose a wave," said I. "It is a question."

"They believe they gain. It may be superstitious; still I think there is some reality in their idea. The loss is a gain. The boat is a trifle longer in getting in; each man is nearer to his home."

I did not understand, for my brain was stupid, and I felt ashamed at seeing him again; but he said no more about the boat or the men, though we watched them out of sight. Then he sat down at my side. I felt his brown eyes on me; but what came next I can never write. It is only for him and me. The minutes passed on, each bearing away a pain from my heart. He told me he had come to Dieppe on purpose to see me, and with the remainder of his life endeavor to banish the remembrance of the mistake that had cost me so much. And I could only weep and weep, till Lydia came back to put his hand in mine, and ask if I would be her sister.

It is all told now. A month after, we left Dieppe; and were married by special license before he took me home to The Meadows as his wife. Mrs. Murray was glad to welcome me, and have her eldest boy near her, happy, though Mrs. John was not so pleased as she might have been. And George and I talk freely of the past; and I, too, have learnt to sympathize in Miss Chester's sorrow, when she wrote those two sad words, beneath the sketch Colonel Chester permitted him to make from her a few days before her death.

Some day I am to travel, and stop in Maderia, to visit the English cemetery and see her grave. Still he carries the sketch; but the mystery is gone between us, and we are very strangely happy, he and I. He does not tremble at my baby, though often I see the little fingers twine round his; indeed, I think he likes to feel the strange soft touch of baby's cheek against his own.

A wise man will desire no more than he may get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and live contentedly upon. Should like to see that wise man.

Henry Ward Beecher is to furnish a story for the New York Ledger. The first chapter will be published early next year.

Women should always set good examples, for the men are always following after them.

The influx of immigration into Texas at the present time is reported very great.

Prentice says Butler makes war as a boy sleeps in cold weather—spoon fashion.

Opportunities like eggs, must be hatched when they are fresh.

HOW YOUNG PERSONS ARE CAUGHT

A friend of the writer had a young man in his office that was very fond of doing just what other persons did, not thinking of the difference in age and circumstances between himself and the men around him. One day the gentleman went into his barber's shop to be shaved, just as his clerk was coming out of the same place. The barber did not know that the merchant was acquainted with this boy, so he said to him, "Did you notice that lad that went out as you came in?" "Oh! yes," said the merchant. "Well," remarked the barber, "that boy has his shaving-pot and razor here, and he comes in every day to be shaved, although he has not a hair upon his face!" He wanted to do as others did, no matter what it cost him, or how silly it appeared; and this and other things came very near proving the boy's ruin.

Now, boys will make themselves sick learning to smoke or chew tobacco; they will bring upon themselves a most expensive habit, and one that may seriously, if not fatally injure their health, in order to do as others do. This is the way the monkeys were caught!

Many fall into the habit of Sabbath-breaking, because they see others seeming to take pleasure in such a course, and without thinking of the sad consequences that may follow they do as others do.

This is the way the young man falls into the temptation of drinking. The company around him sip the wine. He dreads to be singular, although to stand alone is often to stand with God! Apparently very respectable people drink wine. The evil consequences do not appear at once. They must do as other people do, so they begin to draw on the dreadful boots!

How much misery follows in the train when one seeks to do as others do. The young man has made the acquaintance of gay young fellows of his own age. Their parents are rich, and he is flattered by their notice. He is invited to their homes and is offered wine at their tables. He must do, he thinks, as other people do. The lads take him to a billiard room, and of course he must play with them. They then give him a treat of oysters and wine before he leaves for his home.

Now he must do as they do. In his turn he must order them a fine supper at some noted restaurant. This continues month after month. He, by and by, comes home to his Christian mother, late at night, so excited by liquor that he is almost beside himself. O, the agony of that home! But this only the beginning. He has drawn the boots on, but how shall he remove them! His parents are neither able nor willing to supply him with money to be expended for such purposes. But he is so involved in the round of dissipation upon which he has entered that he cannot tear himself away from it. As he cannot obtain money enough honestly, he now falls into the temptation of taking it dishonestly. Ruin does not wait long for him then. He is discovered; he is arrested, and some place of restraint or punishment closes its door upon him. This is the history of many bright boys that have, and are still, in the House of Refuge.

Never follow another unless you know he is in the right path; and never fear to stand up alone for the right.

Twenty Years.—Only think of it, a young man; twenty years in prison. A young man commits a desperate deed against the law, which not only destroys property but endangers life; he is arrested, tried and convicted; the judge sentences him to a long imprisonment—not for life, but for twenty years, the best part of his life. How changed will all things appear to the old man, the man who entered those walls full of life and vigor, but with a down cast look and broken hopes—when he emerges once more into the busy world, with wrinkled features and silvery hair and feeble frame. Which way will he turn to meet the friends of his youth, or who will remember in him—the old man of forty-five or fifty years—the young and active man of twenty years of age? Young men, whose acts occasionally lead you into errors against the peace of the neighborhood and into the breaking of the law, stop and think of twenty years in prison—twenty years of hopeless toil for the State—twenty years of incarceration away from the bright fields of the outer world. Is it not dreadful to think about it even? How much more so is the reality.

"Tell me, angelic host, ye messengers of love, shall swindled printers here below have no redress above?" The shining angel band replied; To us is knowledge given; delinquents on the printer's books can never enter Heaven."

If ladies appreciated the beauty of their feet as they do that of their necks and shoulders, they would probably go to balls barefooted.

What air does the young mouse sing to the old mouse, while biting his way through the scenery at the opera? "Hear me gnaw, ma."

Have courage to prefer comfort and propriety to fashion in all things.

A German paper states that a young man recently married a widow twice his age, and he ascertained subsequently that his wife had once been his wet nurse.