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"WORTHY A KING'S RANSOM"

"And the princess will come some day and she will say to you, Davy, you have kept it many years for me and I will reward you with jewels worthy a king's ransom."

Anna's eyes, the large, thoughtful eyes of the dreamer, sparkled as she finished the story, and the group around the driftwood fire stared breathlessly as she handed the carved box to his finger and whispered mysteriously:

"Take good care of it, Davy, for the reward will be great."

Anna had a wonderful gift, the power to weave enchanting tales of the countries from which this golden box had found its way, and this day, with a promise of rain, the magic seemed especially in her blood and her words and manner gave the story a strong feeling of reality.

"I wonder when the princess will come for the box," Davy often asked himself as day after day he carefully dusted it and examined its curious beauty.

As the years went by and he grew out of the imagination and dreams of childhood, away from the weakness of a delicate boyhood to a man strong and kind, he kept the box in memory of those days by the river when the world beyond the valley was a wonderful place indeed.

Anna, whose gift had drawn with irresistible magnetism her group of playmates, about her, had traveled since in many lands, and now her audience took in half the world, but at heart she was still the same charming girl. She had been his boyish idea, she was doubly so now, and the box had become very precious, not because of the princess now, but because it was so unaccompanied with the charm of Anna.

"If I could only take the Dunway contract," Ned, he confided to his bosom friend, careless, good-natured Ned, rich and idle, the opposite of Davy, whom he worshipped.

It had been an evening of confidences, and for the first time Davy had told the story of Anna, prompted by Ned's interest in the carved box.

"Why can't you, Davy?—it will make you!" exclaimed Ned, aroused to unwanted enthusiasm, for Davy had unconsciously worked much sweetness into the story. "If it's the money, Davy, I'll back you to my last cent. That's all right," as his friend protested; "you might as well be using it. Why!" he ejaculated, "it will be more than doubled if you carry out your part."

A glad light entered Davy's eyes. "Ned, I can't thank you now," he choked a little. "Some day I'll tell you what it means to me, and I promise you that you will never be sorry for it!"

Work he did. Men stood back in amazement at the young engineer and the stupendous contract. Cautious men shook their heads.

"He has bitten off more than he can swallow," was their comment.

They did not know the wonderful hope that was urging him on, and then, too, with Ned behind him failure was impossible.

Anna read of his progress in the daily papers.

Then suddenly came the end. One raw March day Ned took a sudden chill and in a few hours pneumonia had claimed a victim. It all happened so quickly Davy scarcely realized until he sat the evening after the funeral in their lonely room. Outside the winds were shrieking a requiem and somehow he could not forget the falling gravel on the wooden box.

Not only was his friend gone, but looming up was the horror of the unfinished contract. Diffidence had kept him from asking Ned to place his promise in writing. In a day or two he must go down to financial ruin, never again to raise his head in the business world.

As for Anna—his eyes instinctively sought the carved box and black despair crept over him. He lay in a stupor until he seemed to hear her voice, "And the princess will reward you with jewels worthy a king's ransom."

He roused himself and struggled bravely to his feet. "I must get a grip on myself," he smiled the ghost of a smile over a face which seemed to have aged years in a few days.

He took the box from the shelf with fingers which trembled in spite of his efforts to control himself. "Anna! Anna!" he said, in a broken whisper, "if you could only have known how much I cared."

The box slipped from his fingers and clattered to the marble hearthstone. His face was white, his lips were tightly closed, but he had mastered himself. After a few minutes he stooped wearily and picked it up—the remainder of the old days and what might have been.

It was badly damaged from its fall and he saw something in a crack in the bottom. Examining it closely he saw that the box had a false bottom. In wondering amazement he opened it and took a gleaming handful of precious stones from their hiding place where they had lain for years undisturbed.

Unskilled as he was he could see they were genuine, but it took him some time to realize that it was all ending as gloriously as any fairy tale of Anna's creation, for over the years a loved voice floated, "Jewels worthy a king's ransom." Worthy, indeed! For it meant to him loving remembrance of his friend, success in his chosen career, and—Anna!—MARGARET E. DONNELLAN.

Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint. Teacher—The girl got no hint.

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Her Dilemma.

Bessie—Oh, Mabel, I am in an awful dilemma! I've quarreled with Harry and he wants me to send him my ring back.

Mabel—That's too bad. Fossie—But that isn't the point. I've forgotten which is his ring. Kansas City Journal.

That Was Something.

He had never been to sea before. "Can you keep anything on your stomach?" the ship doctor asked. "No, sir," he returned feebly. "Nothing but my hand."

The Titled Husband.

"How did he lose his money?" "His father-in-law failed."

A Quiet Notice.

A ruralist in Missouri posted his lands—the notices reading as follows: "Notice—Trespasser will be persecuted to the full extent of 3 mean mongrel dogs which ain't never been overy sensible with strangers an' I dubbel barl stool you with aint loaded with no soft shiners an' I'll shoot of this haidral on my shawty."

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Microscopical Tests of Metals.

More and more attention is paid to the results of microscopical examination of iron, steel and other metals, to detect faults and structural peculiarities. Special microscopes have been devised for such purposes. Mr. Thomas Andrews, an English metal lurge engineer, reports the results of such an examination of a fractured boiler stay-bolt from a British warship, and draws important conclusions. The examination revealed many minute flaws, chiefly composed of microscopic segregations of sulphid of manganese or sulphid of iron. The bolt had been subjected to a great strain, and Mr. Andrews believes that a line of weakness in the metal, originating at one or more of the minute flaws, promoted the final fracture. But the bolt was a fair specimen of normal mild Siemens steel, and the opinion is expressed that steel is not as good a material as the heat wrought iron for boiler stay-bolts.

Her One Desire.

This lecturer had been describing some of the sights he had seen abroad, "that one never forgets," he said, "I wish you would tell me where I can get a pair of them." exclaimed an old lady in the audience, "I'm always forgetting mine."

Good Reason.

"Have you heard that Jim has quit smoking?"

"No."

"Yes; you see, he is a little near-sighted, and the other day he emptied his pipe in a powder barrel."

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A Bout With Fame

I met her at the Mardi Gras. From the very first she struck me as unusual. She masqueraded as Fame, with legion tongues pretending concealment in the gauzy folds of her dress.

"Here's one girl who owns up to being a gossip," thought I, and from the very oddity of the thing secured an introduction.

I played the role of Chatterbox, and, not to crowd about it at all, felt that I ought to make a hit.

With my most gallant stiff-armed effort I swung Fame through the dance, but somehow or other, I could not for the life of me get beyond voicing the usual platitudes. It settled me. Ordinarily, aided by my glib tongue, I fostered acquaintance very successfully.

The gap in the conversation was becoming a chasm when the girl came to the rescue. Pointing to her legual trophies, she laughingly inquired, "Have I annexed yours, too?"

Somewhat piqued, I answered, "When Fame comes to one so suddenly, the shock is likely to render one dumb."

"Choose," she said generously, sweeping her free hand across her wares. "Would you speak with the tongue of man or of angels?"

"But if I have not charity?" I handled.

"You will be a rich man some day."

We both laughed.

"Here," and detaching a tongue, she held it out to me.

I rolled my eyes in mock horror. "Dare I take the risk? You know friend Esop says it is the best or worst thing in the world."

"I guarantee this to be a very civil tongue," she argued. "Will you keep it?"

After a delicate bit of navigation, I suddenly remembered that Fame should also be equipped with myriads of eyes and ears. Upon mentioning the fact to the lady, she said, "Look right at me."

That was easy. She had pretty eyes.

"And listen."

I hung breathless.

"You are listening carefully?"

I assured her, with eyes riveted.

"Then why," she solemnly questioned, "should I carry excess baggage, when obviously, you are all eyes and ears?"

I bowed acknowledgment of my defect. And she laughed again. In fact, we both did. She had a mighty infectious laugh.

A little wave of color swept across her face, but she answered airily, "Ah, but you know she is an elusive creature; what if she were to develop Protean tendencies and become a Cause for Interviews, Headlines and Alimony?"

"In that case," said I, "she would have to change her name, and be called Infamy. Would you very much mind changing your name?"

Smilingly, she replied, "Under the conditions, I think it would be infamously, don't you?"

I didn't, but didn't dare say so. What soft, wavy hair she had!

During the intermission, she very naively insisted upon a grape sherbet as being most color-proper for the near advent of the season of penance.

"I love sherbet," she confided. "It must love you," I exchanged.

"Why?"

"Likes attract," I murmured, just by way of a change on the "sweets to the sweet" proposition.

"Oh, am I as frigid as that?"

But I knew that she had misunderstood purposely, for her voice wasn't at all cold.

We went into the conservatory. The soft gloom was very restful after the radiance of the ball-room. We gave a mutual sigh of gratitude as we sank into a comfortable nook. Fame's satisfied yawn was a tribute to the place.

"No wonder people like it here," she said. "It's the pretty green."

"Tastily, the pretty experienced," I returned.

She laughed, then stopped suddenly and looked at me. But I was a merely-pleased-with-having-embellished-successful-joke expression, so she relented.

The softened gaiety of the music floated in to us, and now and then we caught glimpses of Monk and Columbine, Dragon and Shepherdesse; all caught alike in its merry whirl.

"Isn't it entrancing?" breathed Fame.

"Mm," I agreed, studying the curve of her cheek. "Do you prefer lyric or martial music?" I inquired, with the half-brown air of a student.

"Well," she said ingenuously, "I think I prefer the music which calls to arms."

"Maybe I was a fool, but I couldn't resist the impulse to crush both her hands in mine."

My fingers recoiled from the hardness of a one-stoned ring upon her left hand. The stone was turned under, too; the mix.

"My dear Fame," I said, "I fear you are the woman with the serpent's tongue."

"My dear friend," she laughed, "why do you deplore it? Hath not the serpent been gifted with wisdom?"

Which I might have remembered. I might also have remembered that Fame is fleeting. As it was, I felt a sudden inclination to swear. But she had endowed me with a civil tongue you know, and I had promised to keep it.—MARRIE B. WHITE.

Frank Confession.

"Mr. Gizzard," asked the caller, "are you carrying all the life insurance you can afford?"

"No," answered the man at the desk. "I can afford more, and I had expected to take out more, but from a note I got from my employer this morning I have begun to suspect that I'm carrying a good deal more than I'm worth."

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