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### Select Poetry.

#### OLD MEMORIES.

How many Aprils have I roamed beside thee  
O'er the brown hills where now alone I tread?  
And though far realms of wonder now divide thee  
From our dim world, I cannot deem thee dead.  
And held thee in my arms while life was falling,  
Close in my arms and watched thy fluttering breath,  
Till the red sunset in the west was paling  
And twilight veiled the awful calm of death.  
In that white calm I saw then and forever  
The grandeur of thy spirit and its power;  
E'en as its mortal vestment seemed to sever,  
I saw the immortal bursting into flower.  
That soul, so lofty in its isolation;  
So strong in weakness, resolute in pain;  
So self-reliant in its reprobation  
Of servile arts and custom's iron reign;  
Mid alien crowds alone, with none to know thee,  
With nothing left behind to regret,  
Save one sad heart that love's sweet debt doth owe thee,  
One lonely heart that never can forget.

### A LIFE STAKE.

#### A STORY OF THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

CHAUNCEY DISBROWE was the most reckless, dare-devil sort of fellow I ever saw. It is necessary that you understand that, else the story I am about to relate will seem incredible.—Many a man beside myself remembers now one day, when he and I were in the Montana gold-fields together, and Sacramento Jim (otherwise known as the California Giant) came along, and, pulling up one of our stakes, put it down again to suit himself,—how Chauncey looked up at him coolly, and requested him to put it back where he took it from. Jim laughed coarsely.  
“Not much, my bantam,” said he.—“Who's boss o' this yere ranche, I sh'd like ter know?”  
Whereupon Chauncey answered, carelessly:  
“Very well: suit yourself.” And talking away a few steps, turned suddenly, drew a pistol as quick as lightning, and shot the bully dead. Then he went back, quite unconcernedly, and replaced the stake. That was just the kind of man Chauncey was,—only let me add, that in spite of it all, he was a thoroughly good fellow, one of those men whom you can “tieto,” as we say out there. There was not a man in the camp but respected him all the more after he shot that fellow.  
But Disbrowe had other accomplishments besides his shooting. He was the most perfect gambler I ever knew.—Losing or winning was apparently the same to him. Let the cards turn as they would, he never showed in his face that he cared a penny either way. Only those who knew him best, always could tell when he was losing, by his extreme anxiety and unconcern. I saw him once, in an hour's time, lose what it had taken him two years of hard work to get,—some thirty thousand dollars' worth of gold; and yet he laughed as merrily over it as though it had been the best joke in the world. And once I saw him play for a still higher stake than that,—nothing less than his own life. And, when he found that he had lost, he stood up to pay the forfeit, with a smile so careless and genuine that there was not a man in that crowd of lookers-on, roughs and gamblers though they were, that worshipped him for it. It is of this

desperate stake I am going to tell you now.

We were down at “Frisco” one day last winter, Chauncey and I, when all at once he stopped just, before the office of the “Life-and-Death Insurance Company.”

“Reddy,” said he (my name is Redwood, but I've always been “Reddy” to him), “Reddy, I'm going in for a policy.”

“What have you to get insured for?” I inquired, wondering. I knew that he had not a thousand dollars in the world just then. Only a week before he had borrowed five thousand of me, which he had at once deposited in a flourishing faro bank down town, and from which he was not likely to soon draw it out again.

“I have myself to insure,” he replied. “I don't feel just right about that five thousand dollars. If anything should happen to me you'd lose it sure.”

“If anything should happen to you, old boy, I shouldn't care whether I lost it or not.”

“I know it, Reddy; but I should.—You are the nearest to me of anybody now. I'm going to take out a policy for twenty thousand dollars, and in your favor. Then, if I go under at any time, you'll be all right.”

Of course I objected to this squarely, though to no effect. We entered the office, and Disbrowe announced his errand. He was well known in the city, and much respected notwithstanding his wild life. No one ever spoke of him but as a man of honor. He had no difficulty at all now in obtaining a policy. They knew that he carried “his life in his hand,” and who was careless of any peril; but they knew too that he was a hard man to kill. He had been hard-hit more than once, and came out all right. It was a common superstition West of the mountains that Chauncey Disbrowe was not born to be shot.—And as for his health, it was simply perfect. A more splendid specimen of physical manhood did not live.

So a policy was made out,—a policy for twenty thousand dollars; and, paying his first premium at once, Chauncey handed the document to me. I declined to take charge of it. Had I foreseen what was to come of that bit of paper, I would have torn it to atoms on the spot.

“All right,” said he, coolly, when I shook my head; “I suppose it's just as well for me to keep it. We're always together.” And he buttoned it up in his pocket.

It was not long after this that we went East as far as Denver City; and, as ill-luck would have it, there we fell in with Richmond again. Richmond was a cold-blooded, out-and-out rascal. Chauncey knew that as well as I did, and therefore I never could understand why my friend did not cut the man dead, and have nothing more to do with him. It came out, however, this night we met Richmond at Denver, that Chauncey had lost money to him at cards some time before; and, though the debt ground him a good deal, still, as he could not pay the money, he was to a certain extent in Richmond's power. The latter was a smooth, oily kind of fellow,—one with whom it would be difficult to quarrel.

It was at a rather low place—I think it was a den known as Buckner's Bower—that we met Richmond that evening. As a general thing, I tried to keep my friend away from such places; for, as I have said, he was an inveterate gamester and the very sight of play always gave edge to his appetite. But on this night I did not take much thought on the matter, and I knew he had very little money about him, and I myself had still less.

At most of the tables “sell pitch” appeared to be the chief occupation.—There was one, however, in the middle of the room, where, from the large number of lookers-on, we concluded that “bluff” must be the attraction; and to this table we made our way. True enough, bluff was the game; and, sitting there, coolly shuffling his cards, and betting with unwavering confidence on his own hand, with apparent recklessness, but really with consummate cunning and calculation, was Richmond. He nodded to us, and his eye sought Chauncey's with a peculiar gleam as we drew near.

Disbrowe stood for a long while behind Richmond's chair, looking over that gentleman's hand, and watching his play. As for me, I took little interest in the game, and most of the time was watching Chauncey himself. I could see by his eyes that the demon of play was again awake in his bosom.—Moreover, he despised Richmond, and it provoked him to see how the fellow was fleecing his opponent, a drover from up-country. Not that Richmond was playing an unfair game, but his superior skill and discernment enabled him to judge his hand much more certainly than the other. Chauncey felt that if he could only be in the countryman's place the thing would be a trifle more equal.

Once he looked over at me with an imploring glance, as much as to say, “Old fellow, haven't you got any cash about you? I know I could win to-night.” But I shook my head; and I was glad too that I could do so honestly.

Then I saw Chauncey more than once look wistfully at the diamond on his finger,—a valuable stone, worth something like a thousand dollars. I knew that he prized that ring very highly, and had never allowed himself to risk it.

Presently the drover pushed back his chair, and arose.

“I've had enough, I calkerlate,” he said, rather crestfallen. “What colateral I've got I'm ruther disposed to hold on to. Anybody want to take my place?” And he looked around inquiringly.

Chauncey stepped quickly forward to the empty chair.

“I'll take it,” said he, without hesitation. “I'll give you a chance to win what little I have, Rich.” And he took out about fifty dollars, and laid them on the table. Richmond did not answer a word, but went on shuffling the pack.—On the very first hand Chauncey risked his whole “pile,” and lost it.

“Is that the way of it?” he said, pleasantly. “Well, well; let's see what this will do.” And he drew the diamond from his finger and flung it on the table. “You know the ring, Rich. Of course you'll go me a thousand for it?”

Richmond simply bowed, and the game went on. Disbrowe evidently meant to “put it to the test to win or lose it all.” Again he kept on betting, with perfect assurance, and staked the entire value of the ring. Then he “called” his opponent's hand, and upon its being shown, I was surprised and delighted (for I was really feeling anxious about it) to find that my friend had won. Richmond merely bit his lip disdainfully, and motioned Chauncey to cut.

It was Richmond who was leading the betting this time. He ran the stake up to two thousand dollars, the exact amount in Chauncey's possession reckoning the ring; and then the hands were again dropped. I could hardly retain myself. Chauncey had again won, and had now three thousand dollars, still retaining his ring. I stepped forward and begged him to leave off before he became himself the loser; but at that Richmond spoke up in his cold, sneering way,—

“Mr. Disbrowe will certainly not think of going without giving me satisfaction; especially since he is already in my debt to the amount of sixteen thousand dollars.”

Disbrowe sprang to his feet, his eyes fairly blazing.

“Sir,” he cried, “none but a coward and blackguard would speak like that.—You shall never fling that debt into my face again, sir. I'll play it out with you to-night if I die for it. Then he unbuttoned his coat, and drew out a paper, which I at once recognized as the insurance policy. “Here,” he went on, excitedly, “is a policy on my life for twenty thousand dollars. It is payable to Redwood. He shall assign it to you, all but five thousand dollars, which give him. Then I will put another thousand to it, and play it against the sixteen thousand which I owe you. If I win, I am clear of you forever; if I lose, then”—Disbrowe lifted his hand solemnly in the air, and the whole room was breathless, hanging on his words, which rang out loud and clear—“then, upon my honor as a gentleman, I will shoot myself dead at this table, and the money will be yours. You know me, Gaunt Richmond, and you know that I will do as I say.”

He drew his revolver from his pocket, cocked it, and laid it significantly on the table. Then he sat down again, and looked inquiringly at his adversary.

“In which case I can merely get the sixteen thousand already due me,” Richmond answered, with a sneer. “However, inasmuch as the debt was good for just nothing, I accept. Send for a lawyer.”

While we were waiting for the notary's appearance, I, with many others in the room, tried to dissuade Chauncey from his desperate purpose; but I knew well we might as well have tried to soften a rock. I offered to raise the sixteen thousand dollars, and pay the debt; but in vain. Nothing would satisfy him but to play out the stake he had proposed. “It's no use, gentlemen. I know what I'm about,” was all we could get out of him. One thing I managed to do, unnoticed by Chauncey or Richmond, and, as far as I knew, by any one else present. I took my revolver, whose chambers had recently been emptied, though the “dead cartridges” were still there, and substituted it for Disbrowe's on the table.

Presently the notary public made his appearance, and the policy was duly assigned to Richmond. Of course I had no choice but to sign the paper. I really felt a good deal as Chauncey did about the debt,—that it must be paid. But, standing there, with Disbrowe's loaded revolver in my breast, I made up my mind that, if Chauncey's life was forfeited Richmond should not long outlive him.

The cards were now dealt. I looked over Chauncey's hand. He certainly had an unusually good one,—one that it would have been safe to bet on nine times out of ten. There was indeed but one combination could beat it. The drover looked a moment, and then turned to me.

“Look here, Mr. Redwood” (I was well known in Denver) “I'd like to bet sixteen thousand dollars on that hand myself. What d'ye say? I've got the money right here.”

“But I haven't,” I answered.

“Wal,” said he, “yer friend thar, he's a winnin' man ter-night. You see, he's put that thar ring on again for ther extry thousand. I'm superstitious, I am. I'll make ther bet with yer, an' then, ef you lose, why, I know all about yer.—I'll take yer note for the money.”

I looked into the man's honest, kindly face as he made this proposal, and I saw that he was in earnest. If Chauncey lost, he meant for me to win enough to pay the stake and save his life. I made up my mind at once of course.

“All right; I'll take your bet,” I said. Richmond had merely glanced at his hand, and then laid it, face down, upon the table. “Well,” asked he, carelessly, “are you prepared to back your hand?”

“Yes, sir,” Chauncey answered, curtly.

“For how much?”

“Sixteen thousand dollars.”

Richmond raised his eyebrows just a trifle at this. “Very well,” said he, quietly; “I call you, and showed his hand. It was the one combination to be dreaded. *Chauncey had lost.*

There was an awful stillness all through the room. Chauncey just glanced at the other's hand, and perceived that he had lost; but not a muscle of his face changed.

“I am quite satisfied, sir,” he said, to Richmond. “You will let me redeem the ring?” And he took up the diamond, putting down a thousand dollars in its place. “Reddy, old fellow, you'll wear the ring for the sake of old times? And here are a couple of thousands you had better take. I shan't want it, you know.” Then he turned to Richmond again, and, saying, “I am glad that you and I are quits, sir,” he suddenly, before any one could lift a hand, seized the revolver, placed it close to his temple, and pulled the trigger. Of course no report followed.

He glanced at the weapon in surprise; and, understanding at once the deception, he looked around at me. It was the first time I had ever met that angry flash in his eyes that others had felt so often.

“You had no right to do that, Redwood,” he said sternly. “Nor was it kind. It would have been all over now. Where is my revolver?”

But now the drover came forward. “Here's suthin' better'n that,” he

said, hastily. “Yer friend here hes jest won what you hev lost. Yer'd better take back yer life, and let him pay ther debt.”

Disbrowe looked at me again; and, taking the money, I explained just how I had “hedged” his bet by backing Richmond's hand. Chauncey's look did not change in the least.

“Very well,” he said. “I do not see but that is perfectly fair. You'll lend me the money, of course?”

Then he turned to the table and picked up the policy again, putting down the money in exchange, acting all the while as though life and death were one and the same thing to him.

“Wal, by Mustapha!” ejaculated the drover, admiringly. “That feller's game every time. He's wuth savin', he is.”

All this while Richmond sat there with a sneer. “Hold on, sir!” he said, as Chauncey took up the policy. “I don't want your money. I prefer the original stake, your life. I have a right to that, I think.”

Chauncey looked at him, deliberating coolly with himself. “Well,” said he at length, “perhaps you are right. How, is it gentlemen?”

And he looked around upon the faces about him.

“No, no, no!” burst forth in a kind of indignant roar from the crowd. “Put out the blackguard! Throw him into the street!”

Then Chauncey's voice rang out again. “No, no, gentlemen; let him alone. May be it is his right. If so,—if my life belongs to him,—let him come and take it!” And he drew a big bowie-knife from his breast, and stood there looking so fierce and defiant that it would have taken a braver man than Gaunt Richmond to claim his blood.

#### Badly Mixed Up.

THERE is a young lady in this city who says she has more parents and step-parents living than any one she ever heard tell of. This is the way she tells the story:

“You know papa and mamma never could agree, and so finally they got divorced. I don't say whose fault it was, but mamma really did behave ugly sometimes, and even I could not get along with her. So when the separation came I went to live with papa. Shortly afterwards mamma married again, and papa was not long in following suit. I did not like it very well at first, but my step-mother turned out to be first-rate and I got to like her splendid. Then papa seemed to get infatuated with another woman that he got acquainted with, and she wheedled around him until she made trouble, and the result was another divorce, and papa soon married the woman that made the trouble. When the second separation took place I went with my stepmother, because I loved her and because my services were necessary to help take care of the baby. Then what does she do but go and get married. I declare I never saw so much marrying in my life. It only happend a little while ago, and my step-stepfather—I suppose he is—treats me in a very kindly sort of way, as if he felt he couldn't help himself, but didn't exactly like it, and I don't like it a bit. I can't go back to mamma, because she is mad with me for going with pa in the first instance, and I can't go with pa because of that wheedling woman, and I can't bear to stay where I am. It is too bad that a girl should have a father and a mother and two step-fathers and two stepmothers, all living at once, and not a home that she can feel at home in.”—*St. Louis Republican.*

A good wife is to a man wisdom, strength and courage. A bad one confusion, weakness and despair. No condition is hopeless to a man where the wife possesses firmness, decision and economy. There is no outward propriety that can counteract indolence, extravagance and folly at home. No spirit can long endure bad influences. Man is strong, but his heart is not iron. He needs a tranquil home, and if he is an intelligent man, he needs its moral force in the conflict of life. To recover his composure, home must be a place of peace and comfort. There his soul renews its strength and he goes forth with renewed vigor to encounter the labor and troubles of life. But if at home he finds no rest, and there is met with bad temper, jealousy and gloom, or assailed with complaints and censure, hopes vanishes and he sinks to despair.