



## THE TIMES.

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## Select Poetry.

## A HEART CRY.

Little lost darling, come back to me!  
Lie in my arms as you used to do!  
Here is the place where your head should be;  
Here is the bosom waiting for you!

Let me but feel again on my breast  
The velvet touch of your tiny hand;  
Your rosy-lip lips to my own close prest,  
My cheek by your balmy breathings fanned.

See here; I shut tight my weary eyes,  
As thousands of times I've done in play.  
When I unclosed them in soft surprise,  
Ring out a laugh in your sweet old way!

Come to me, come to me, precious one!  
I am so heart-sick and sad and lorn;  
Naked as nature without the sun,  
Now that the light of my life has gone.

You sleep in the churchyard all alone,  
No one to watch by your narrow bed;  
The wind o'er your tender body blown,  
And night-dews dripped on your baby-head.

No! In the luminous fields above,  
Angels another new star have set,  
They may surround you with ceaseless love,  
Shield you from sorrow and sinning—yet

Heaven can not need you so much as I!  
Legions of cherubs it had before.  
Baby, my baby, why did you die?  
Come to your mother, my own, once more!

Little lost darling, come back to me!  
Lie in my arms as you used to do!  
Here is the place where your head should be!  
Here on the bosom waiting for you!

## A CLEVER THEFT.

JOHN RIDDEL was a young man in whom confidence was justly placed by Messrs. Moonstone & Co., jewelers, his employers, in whose establishment, at the time we became acquainted with him, he occupied the post of foreman. He was not a "self-made man" as yet, but he was on the road to it. For, as we all know, Providence has still the advantage of priority in this particular, it makes its man (such as he is) at a comparatively early date, whereas, when a man makes himself, he seldom accomplishes it before he is five-and-forty at the very least—when, indeed, the other cannot be compared with him. John never drank, except a glass of beer with his early dinner; he never smoked, nor of course took snuff; he never handled anything in the shape of a billiard cue, unless it was his neatly and tightly rolled-up umbrella; he never—I was going to add he had no weakness as regards the ladies, but this I hardly dare to write, because of the extreme attention he paid to his very fine head of hair. Why should any man, not being a Narcissus, take such great pains with his hair, unless to make an impression on the ladies?

Yet even here I must hasten to do John Riddel justice; it would have shocked him to have supposed that he had any general views in this direction. He was not a Don Juan, nor even a gay Lothario; if he had any designs, they would have been upon one lady only, and by no means induced by any meretricious attractions such as youth or beauty; he would, in accordance with precedent, have attached himself to his master's daughter, though she had been twenty years older than himself, or a black woman, or an albino. Unfortunately, Mr. Moonstone had only nephews, whom our hero could not marry, and who would, in all probability, become partners in the concern before him. Still, he cultivated that fine head of hair, harrowed it with a turtoise-shell comb, drove a furrow straight across it from his brow to the nape of his neck and top-dressed it with macassar oil and other unguents. It shone in the

sun as brightly as any of Messrs. Moonstone & Co.'s most costly wares, over which he presided.

There were other assistants in the shop, and with them I am sorry to say Mr. John Riddel was not popular— young men rarely appreciate in their associates so much virtue as resided in our hero, and especially if that virtue has not been its own reward, but has enabled its possessor to walk over their heads and stop there. There was hardly one among them but at some time during his servitude with Messrs. Moonstone had mislaid a ring or a trinket for a few hours, or had even caused some loss to the firm, not so much through carelessness as from not being as wide awake as a weasel.

For the way of a jeweler's assistant is set with springs. It is calculated that about one per cent. of the customers at such establishments are roughs and vagabonds, people who come to spy out, not the nakedness of the land, but its richness, and if possible to possess themselves of them by force or fraud. And these look as little like rogues as nature and art can enable them to do. Notwithstanding all that has been written upon the deceitfulness of riches, it is difficult to believe that a gentleman who drives his own mail phaeton, or a lady who comes in a chariot, upon C springs, are brigands in disguise. Yet the young men at Messrs. Moonstone's has been, most of them, taken in by appearances. One of them had taken jewelry to a newly married couple at a fashionable hotel "on approval," and had been so successful in his recommendations that they had "colored" the whole lot, and gave him such a dose of chloroform in exchange for them that he was unable to give any clear account of his adventures for hours afterward. Another had been set upon by a whole gang of thieves, in such a promiscuous and overwhelming fashion that he could recall nothing of what had happened except that he had been "struck with an instrument like the ace of spades," which the newspapers expressed hope would afford some clue to the police; they thought it showed, I suppose, that the perpetrators of the outrage must be either gardeners or gamblers; but nothing came of the suggestion. Others, again, had been exposed to the seductions of the fair sex, and in losing their hearts had sacrificed the diamonds of their employers.

In this last regard Mr. John Riddel, because adamant, was invaluable.— His youthful as well as handsome looks attracted these ladies of industry, who, on entering the shop, gravitated toward him quite naturally. A man of that age, as they flattered themselves, must surely fall an easy victim to their fascinations. Thieves as they were, they were still women, and perhaps they allowed their feelings to carry them too far; if they had stopped half way, where Mr. Boltby, the Cashier, sat, or at the desk over which Mr. Malton (the hero of the ace of spades) presided, they would have had a better chance; but Boltby was bald and Malton was gray, and woman never will understand that it is from forty to fifty that men are most impressionable with respect to female charms. Your conceited young fellows think it nothing surprising that any lady should fall in love with them, but when a man comes to that mature period which we call (or at least I call) the prime of life, he appreciates the compliment.

I do not say that Mr. John Riddel had not some admirers among the fair sex who loved him for his own sake. Indeed, it was whispered among his detractors that, like the first Duke of Marlborough, and other great men who ought to have known better, he derived pecuniary advantages from their devotion of him; that the sums expended in macassar oil, etc., for the adornment of his appearance, came back to him twenty fold in substantial tokens from Duchesses and Countesses, and the like. Goodness knows whether there was any truth in such stories.— Perhaps it pleased his rivals to invest the drudgery that was their daily lot with this halo of romance. For my part, my tastes are sensational, and I do what I can to make my beliefs correspond with them; but, on the other hand, my strong common sense declares for moderation as regards Mr. Riddel and the ladies of rank; therefore I draw

the line at Duchesses. But he was certainly as fascinating as he was hard-hearted.

When any lady customer who was unknown to him got out of her brougham—for no one ever came in a cab to Messrs. Moonstone's establishment—and moved up the shop in his direction, he looked at her through his half-shut eyes—for they were of the 'dreamy' order of beauty—and murmur to himself:

"Now is this a swindler or a bona fide party?" and many a bona fide party did he serve with much external politeness who little dreamed of the suspicion which she excited within him.

He thought it a bad sign when they took off their gloves, and under such circumstances would always fail to show them those specimens of rough diamonds which a wet finger can carry away with it. And when they offered to pay for their little purchases by check, it was quite pretty to hear him explain, in his soft voice, how the "system" of the firm was a ready money one, and that no exception could be made in favor of any one, however highly connected, who was not personally known to it.

One afternoon a brougham stopped at Messrs. Moonstone's establishment with a widow in it; about the brougham there could be no doubt; it was not a private vehicle, but one of those which are hired by the day or hour; the appearance of the driver, not to mention that of the horse, precluded the possibility of its being the property of the person who employed it! If she thought to be set down among "carriage people" because she used such a conveyance, she must have been sanguine indeed. And so far as that was a good sign. People that came to rob on a scale worth mentioning, (I am not thinking of those who slipped any inconsiderable trifle, such as a ring or a spray, into their muffs; they were always bowed out of the shop into the arms of a policeman in plain clothes who stood at the door), people, I say, who wanted to swindle, were always very particular about the vehicle that brought them.

What aroused suspicion in the watchful eyes of Mr. John Riddel was the widow herself. Like Weller, senior (though without his matrimonial experience to excuse it), he had a prejudice against widows—at least in jewelers' shops; nor I am bound to confess, was it altogether without grounds; the garb and the mein of sorrow being the stalking-horse under which a good deal of knavery is accomplished. And then this widow was so bewitching to look at that he was naturally alarmed; from every neat plait of her beautiful hair, and every fold of her modest suit of mourning, there seemed to him flutter a danger signal. He was wont to declare, indeed, that he knew she was after no good from the first moment he set eyes on her; but that statement must, I think, be received with caution. If his face grew severe and his manner painfully polite, as she came up to where he stood, it was because he knew that Boltby and Malton had got their eyes upon him and were looking out for some sign of weakness.

"I wish to see some rings," she said in a soft and gentle voice; "mourning rings," and then she took off her glove, displaying the whitest little hand imaginable.

Of course, he could not help seeing her hand, nor yet her face, from which she had put back her veil. It wore an expression of sadness, but also one of enfranchisement and content; it seemed to say: "My husband was very unworthy of me; but he has left me free, and I forgive him."

Who has not seen such widows, who wear their weeds almost as if they were flowers, and who have apparently selected black as their only wear, because it looks becoming to them? I've often thought if I could have the choice of my own calling, that, next to being "champion to a lady," I should like to be a young jewelry trying on rings. It must be almost as good as bigamy, trigamy, polygamy, and with none of the risks.

Mr. Riddel said:

"Allow me, Madame," in his most honeyed voice, and slipped ("eased" he called it, and certainly it was very easy

work) ring after ring upon the widow's dainty finger. "I hope I am not hurting you," he murmured.

"Oh; no," she sighed; "there was a time, but that is passed—when it would have given me pleasure. I mean," she added hastily, and with a modest blush, "when rings would have done so; but jewels and gewgaws have no longer any attractions for me."

Mr. John Riddel by no means felt certain of this, but he had an eye for number, and would have missed a ring from the tray in an instant, though he had been exhibiting a thousand. At last she made her choice (it was the most expensive of the whole lot), and produced from the prettiest little bag in the world—a check-book.

"Pardon me, Madame, we do not take checks from—ahem—old customers."

"Well, I am not a very old customer," she said, smiling. ("No; but you are a queer one," he thought, "or I'm much mistaken.") Still, I should have thought in the case of a lady like myself—

"Madame," said this crafty young man, "if it lay in my power to oblige you, there would be no difficulty in the matter; the rule of the firm is, unhappily, what I have stated."

"Then the firm will take my last sixpence?" she rejoined with tender playfulness; and from the most elegant of "portemonnaies" she counted him out the sum required, when its contents in truth were quite exhausted. "I am lodging at De la Bois', the court hair-dresser," she said; "my name is Mrs. Montfort. However, I will not trouble you to send the ring, as I shall have to go home to get some more money," and she looked at him with eyes that seemed to say, "Cruel man, thus to reduce to destitution."

Then she rose and sailed down the shop, carelessly glancing at this or that (chiefly in the hair and mourning department) as she passed out.

"If she is not on the square, she does it uncommonly well," thought Mr. Riddel; "perhaps I have done her an injustice, poor dear."

On the third morning after her visit the widow called again, called quite naturally up to our hero, and cast anchor under his eyes.

"You will think," she remarked, "after what I said the other day about gewgaws, that I am very changeable in my tastes; but I am not come this time upon my own account; I want to see some diamond lockets for a friend."

This is quite the usual course with ladies and others who victimize the jewelers. They buy a ring for £10, and after having thus established themselves—cast out their sprat to catch a herring—they patronize the establishment in earnest.

Singular, to say, however, this did not rouse Mr. Riddel's suspicions. Notwithstanding his pretence of indifference to Mrs. Montfort's charms, he had privately sent to De la Bois, in the interim, and found that the lady did reside at that fashionable hair-dresser's, and on the first floor; he had done it of course, in the interests of the firm, and in case she should call again; but perhaps he would not have been pleased had Messrs. Malton and Boltby been made aware of his precaution.

The locket that pleased her most was an expensive one, perhaps too much so for her friend's purse, she said. It was very foolish of that lady, but she had such a complete reliance upon her (Mrs. Montfort's) taste and judgment that she had placed the matter entirely in her hands. It was a great responsibility.— What did Mr. Riddel think?

Mr. Riddel's thoughts were always out and dried on such occasions. He expressed his opinion that the locket selected by Mrs. Montfort was certainly the most elegant of all, and testified to the sagacity of the lady who had such confidence in her good taste. But as to the price, Mrs. Montfort herself was the only judge as to the state of her friend's exchequer.

"Oh, she's rich enough," smiled Mrs. Montfort, "and as open-handed as any woman can be. Our sex are naturally inclined to be a little close," she added with a smile, "don't you think so?"

Mr. Riddel did not think so; he had always found the ladies very generous in their dealings; in this lady's particu-

lar case he felt more certain than ever that the locket—and he let the light play on it so as to show the brilliant to the best advantage—was the very thing to suit her.

"I think so, too," murmured the widow; but then you see there's the responsibility. I tell you what you must do. You shall send all your lockets to my lodgings for an hour or so, and then my niece, who is staying with me, shall give her opinion on the matter; and by her advice I'll abide."

Mr. Riddel smiled, but shook his beautiful head of hair. Every curl of it—and they were thousands of them—expressed a polished, but decided negative.

"We couldn't do it, Madame, we really could not."

"What! not leave the lockets for an hour."

"No, Madame, not for a moment. Of course it is but a mere formula, one of those hard-and-fast regulations, the existence of which one so often has to deplore; but I have no authority to oblige you as to your request. I can send the lockets, of course or bring them myself—but whoever is in charge of them will have orders not to lose sight of them.— This is an invariable rule with every customer whose name is not entered on our books.

Instead of getting into a rage—genuine, or pretended, if she was a swindler—the widow uttered aloud, rippling laugh,

"Like the voice of a summer brook  
In the leafy month of June,  
Which, to the sleeping woods, all night  
Singseth a quiet tune—"

only her teeth were much whiter than the pebbles of any brook.

"You tickle me," she said,—of course she was only speaking metaphorically,— "so that I really cannot help laughing; it is so droll that you should think I came here to steal lockets."

"My dear Madame," said Mr. Riddel, "pray do not talk like that; if it rested with me" (sly dog that he was) "you could carry off the whole contents of the shop to choose from."

"You are very good and kind," she said. "If any person had expressed such doubts of me I should have been terribly offended. But I quite understand how you are situated. Well, you shall bring the lockets yourself, and for fear you should think I had any wicked designs," she added with a little blush, "will you come this morning? It will be equally convenient to my niece, and you needn't be afraid of being garrotted by daylight."

"My dear Madame," exclaimed Mr. Riddel for the second time, and with a deeper deprecation than before, "how can you? Of course, I will come whenever you please."

"Very good, as my brougham is here, I will drive you home in it."

In five minutes he had packed up all the lockets and was following her elegant though stately figure down the shop.

"There he goes with another Duchess," whispered Malton to Boltby; "see how he runs his hand through his hair."

"Let us hope she will comb it for him," answered Boltby the bald, thinking of that happy pair who had seemed all in all to one another, but hadn't been so preoccupied as to prevent them giving him chloroform. "I believe she's no more a Duchess than you are."

Months rolled on, but though you had gone ever so many times to Messrs. Moonstone's establishment you would not have seen Mr. John Riddel. His flowing cataract of hair no more adorned the foreman's desk, over which gleamed in its place—the moonlight after sunlight—the bald and shining head of Mr. Boltby. And yet our hero was in the shop; he stood at the counter in the farther corner, where the youngest assistant was always placed (in charge of the mourning jewelry), with a Welsh wig on. His own mother—not to mention the Duchess—would never have known him. He had fallen from his high estate, and was beginning life again on the lowest rung of the ladder.

This was how it happened. Mrs. Montfort and her niece, a young lady only less charming than herself, dwelt, as I have said, on the first floor of Mr. De la Bois', the court hair-dresser. They