

THE HABIT OF DELAY.
Could man read Time's pages,
Rec'd every week,
He'd find, through Life's stages,
How oft he had been
Too full of inventions
To satisfy thought,
Too busy to do more than
That which he had to do,
Still waiting to-morrow,
While things in sorrow
Droop'd tears on his way.
—Charles Swain.

THE FALCON.
AN OLD-TIME LOVE STORY.
The fine, old mansion of the Alberti family, near Gloucester, was brilliantly lighted and the sound of music and dancing was borne on the evening air across the rolling, sparkling waters of the Elbe. That night a grand ball was given by Count Alberti, the only remaining representative of the noble family whose name bore the name of the building was massive, high and dark, protected by moat, and drawn and battlemented like a castle. It was built in the time of Frederick II. Outside it looked grand and gloomy; inside it was ablaze with lights and redolent with the perfume of choice flowers which were scattered in profusion, not only about the large reception hall, but in all the smaller apartments which were thrown open to the guests.

In a little room far removed from the rest, in the eastern tower, stood two persons—a young man, remarkable for his deep, earnest features, and a young woman, whose face, and whose handsome, as she listened to her companion with drooping eyes; indeed, most people would call her simply "the girl." Her eyes were dark and blue eyes, and the brilliant, sapphire-like smile broke over her face. The two were standing talking carelessly together, the lady leaning against the heavily-carved oak window frame, and the young man leaning against the wall, his eyes fixed on the girl's face.

"So, Count Alberti, you will be remembered for a long while as the young noble who gave the most splendid ball yet given in Orangeburg. The lips of the young man curled, and he answered contemptuously: "That is surely a name worth giving at any price."

"Of course," said the lady. "But why so scornful? You know that I care only for your approbation; and then the ball is given only in honor and to please you, whose slightest wish I would gratify at any expense."

"Alas, Count Alberti, I am told that you are not so generous," said the young man. "Probably, but the words do not come from the heart as mine do." "Pooh!" said the lady. "They all swear that."

"Very well, Lady Lena," I may say some time to you, but I trust the truth of my words. I have been a fool. For three years I have hung upon your accent, fulfilled your every wish, as far as lay in my power. My fortune—which was ample—I laid at your feet, that you might be able to give me a portion. I am now left in need for this devotion I have received nothing but coldness and scorn. You know that I love you as few men love—with my whole heart and soul—and yet you scorn me. You are rich and noble. I still love you as much as I did when I was a poor boy before you. This once I plead, Lady Lena, to be shown some kindness."

"For the last time I offer you myself. Will you accept me?" "Lady Lena turned very pale as she listened to the rapid, passionate words uttered by the young man who knelt before her. Her eyes grew dark with some inward feeling, but her words destroyed the faint hope which had risen in her heart at the gentle exclamation: "Oh, rise, Count Frederick, for I know this is all nonsense—instantly. To-morrow you will be beside me, as usual, and the next day, just as you have been, and the day after, and the day after that, and so on, until you have become a legend."

"Where now is your boasted love?" I say a bitter thing to you, and you do not retaliate upon a woman as you do. "I cannot forget myself so far as to retaliate upon a woman as you do. You sneer and stroke your falcon, which I know possesses more of your boasted love than I do."

"Jeannette never wounds me," he replied. "In return for my services she does not give me the coldness." "Perhaps she would if she could speak," persisted the lady. "Actions, Lady Lena," said he, "speak louder than words." The girl's eyes flashed, and she turned to the door, but passed as she passed it, and looking over her shoulder, said, contemptuously: "I suppose the cause of your love for that bird is because she once belonged to some former lady love?" "I am not so foolish as to be so easily wounded," she replied, "but she is dead." Without another word Lena sped from the room, her brain on fire, her eyes full of tears. Could Frederick have seen her as she, leaning far out of a window, weeping bitterly, would have thought the bitter words. As it was they parted in anger.

Left alone, Frederick in despair and down the room. In his pained up he murmured aloud: "I have been a cruel fool—a man!"

charged, and all that will remain to me is this old castle, and my faithful nurse, Margaret, who will not leave me, and my falcon. This building now ringing with the sound of music, and the merry laughter will be closed, to become the sanctuary of rats and owls. For myself, I shall withdraw from society, and in this small, gloomy tower, support my poverty and despair as best I may. I have been worse than foolish—I have been wicked. But this unmanly repining will not do. I must rejoin my guests."

"So saying, Frederick replaced the falcon on his perch near the window, and, forcing a gay smile and careless air, went into the ballroom, and from that time till the company left he was seemingly the gayest of the gay."

"Quick, Susan! fasten this bodice and button me my hood and mantle and the thick shoes!" exclaimed Lady Lena; and then, in a low, imperious voice, she said: "You'll have to pin this handkerchief and apron string, for my hands tremble so with excitement. The maid obeyed, and soon her young mistress stood before the mirror, laughing to see herself in complete peasant's attire."

"Will anybody know me, Susan?" she asked, laughingly, as she drew the hood over her face. "No, indeed," Lady Lena, replied the maid; "if I hadn't seen you dress I should not know you myself."

"Then I am off!" And, undressing the action to the word, she looked at Lena one last time, and the graceful Lady Lena ran out of the window, and in a very undignified way. In the garden she was met by a lover of Susan's, who exclaimed: "The dinner was so served, and Lena shuddered as she glanced round the long, dark, unfamiliar room, seen last brilliantly lighted and decorated with every luxury the season afforded and money could buy. What a contrast! Now all the gorgeous hangings, furniture, pictures, silver, glass, and—just as if she were in a new place stood in the empty room a small deal table bearing two covers and one dish of meat. With all his old grace of manner, Frederick led Lena to the table and took his place opposite her."

"Good night, Susan," said he. "I have not much to do, and will wait by the table till you come back." "Away sped Lena. After a pretty long, rapid walk she reached Castle Alberti, and, entering by a low, postern door which she found open, made her way to the room of her mother, where she saw old Margaret seated.

"Good night, Dama Margaret," said Lena. The old woman raised her head, and recognizing Susan, Lady Lena's favorite waiting-maid, she returned a very sultry greeting. "Good night, my dear," said the old woman, "I've got a beautiful note for your young master from my lady."

"You needn't come here with it, then," said Dama Margaret. "Your lady has sent me to bring you a note from her, and to tell you that she is very angry with you."

"But, Margaret, I was sent to deliver it and receive an answer, and I dare not go back without it; it would cost me my place, and you wouldn't be so cruel as to deprive me of my home, would you?" "Here Lena began to sob, and Margaret rose, saying: "You have never done me any harm, so give me the note and let me take it upstairs quickly. The note was produced, and Margaret read it, and she said: "Much good it will do my young master. It isn't sealed very closely, and I could read it; I would open it, and then if there was anything in it to wrong him, I would tell him. This by this time she had reached the second story and knocked at the door."

"Come in," said Frederick, who was seated by the window reading. He looked up at the door, and entered, and asked what she wanted.

"Oh! I don't take on so, Margaret. I am sorry your master is so poor, but he will offer my lady a dish valuable than any other at a Central avenue grocery store."

"Do you keep coffee here?" inquired a lady who came to a Central avenue grocery store. "Yes, plenty of it." "I want five pounds of the best." "Haven't got any."

"Why, you just said you kept it, didn't you?" "And that's just what I'm doing with it. I'm keeping it. When you've got the cash I'll sell it!" —Merchant-Traveler.

"Well, I didn't know that, and it is a real shame to roast the bird, and if you will give a secret I'll help you. Give me the bird and I'll take it home and send you another in return. Your master will be none the wiser." Margaret's face lighted up, and earnestly thanking the girl she left the room and so returned with the falcon closed hooded, which she gave to the false Susan, who went off with it.

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