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22 PER ANNUM.

"ON WE MOVE INDISSOLUBLY FIRM; GOD AND NATURE DID THE SAME."

AN ADVANCE

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MARRIAGE AFTER BURIAL

A True Story.

BY FRANCIS S. SMITH.

CHAPTER I.

Antoine Latourette was a merchant in the gay city of Paris. He was a man of more than ordinary ability, and had raised himself from a gamin of Paris to an opulent and respected position in the mercantile world.

Antoine had a bosom friend named Francois Damas—also a merchant and also rich.

Latourette had a beautiful daughter, whom he called Pauline, and Damas had a son, a noble-hearted and splendid-looking youth, whom he had named Antoine, after his life-long friend.

The two young people had loved each other almost from infancy, and when they were still very young it was agreed between their parents that they should marry when they had reached a proper age.

That time was fast approaching. The youth Antoine had reached his twenty-third year, and Pauline was only three years his junior. The wedding day had been fixed and all concerned were looking forward to the nuptials as a season of unalloyed happiness. But "the course of true love never did run smooth," and the loves of Antoine and Pauline were no exception to the rule.

The merchant Latourette had one weakness which overshadowed all his virtues.

Sprung from the lower order of Parisians himself, he no sooner began to accumulate wealth than the desire seized him to become the intimate of those high above him in the social scale. His low origin was the one thorn that rankled in his side, and if he could have wiped out the recollection of his early days by the sacrifice of his entire fortune he would gladly have made that sacrifice and considered himself the gainer by the exchange. And so it happened that just on the eve of the marriage of our hero and heroine, the Marquis De Laporte—a member of the old noblesse—was introduced to the proud old merchant. He was a man some sixty years of age, well-preserved, and of immense wealth. He was unmarried, and having seen the fair Pauline, fate decreed that he should fall desperately in love with her, and fate also decreed that her father should favor the suit of her ancient but high-born lover.

In vain did the poor girl plead, with tears in her eyes, that she should not be sacrificed—in vain did the young lover—her affianced husband—beg and rave by turns—in vain did his life-long friend, Francois Damas, appeal to his sense of honor and point out to him the misery which would too surely follow a union of the marquis and Pauline. He was deaf alike to threats, anathemas and implorations. The idea of his daughter forming so brilliant an alliance had fairly turned his head and wraped his better judgment, and he swore his daughter should marry

her ancient suitor even though she died the moment thereafter.

The merchant's will was all powerful and the young couple were obliged to submit.

Their parting was a painful one—the young lover was frantic with grief, and urged his affianced, by every argument which he could command, to fly with him. The temptation was a fearful one, but her sense of duty and the dread of parental anger outweighed all other considerations, and she determined to accept her fate with what philosophy she could.

And so they separated—the girl begging her lover not to subject her to temptation by remaining near her; and in a few weeks thereafter she was united to her ancient lover.

Little satisfaction, however, did the old marquis receive from the unholy union; for scarcely had the marriage ceremony ended when the bride fell lifeless to the floor, and all efforts to resuscitate her proved entirely unavailing.

Great was the grief of the ancient bridegroom, and deep was the remorse of the bereaved father, as they followed the lifeless body of the bride to the grand mansion which the old marquis had fitted up for her reception; and grand was the funeral which only three days afterward took place.

Among the mourners present at the funeral was the young lover, Antoine Damas. His presence was not prohibited, now that the idol of his soul lay cold in death, and as he stood by the side of the grand coffin, looking down upon the rigid features of the loved and lost, his tears fell like rain, and the bosom of the strong man swelled with an agony which only those who have been similarly bereaved can fully appreciate.

"Farewell, thou wildly-worshipped one!" he mentally ejaculated; "thou hast entered the realms of eternal light, and left me to bewail thy loss, but I will not remain long away from thee! My soul shall greet thine in Paradise ere thou hast been a day buried! Then why should I weep?" he continued, as he hastily brushed the sorrowing drops from his eyes and smiled hopefully. "Is it not better that I should own thee in heaven, than that another should claim thee here? Away, thou foolish tear! and rejoice, oh, my soul! for thy mate shall soon greet thee where all is joy, and peace, and eternal union!"

And so the beautiful dead was laid away to rest in the grand family mausoleum, where slept the ancestors of the old marquis; and when night had fallen upon the scene, the bereaved lover took his way to the lodge occupied by the old sexton, who had charge of the grounds, and knocked gently for admission.

The door was speedily opened, and the sexton—a venerable, gray-haired man of kindly aspect—stood before him.

"How now, my son?" he said, gently, as he gazed in some wonder at the sorrowing face of the youth; "why dost thou seek admission into the lodge of old Joseph at this unusual hour?"

"Father," replied the youth, in a tone of great earnestness, "I would ask a favor of thee."

"If, keeping strictly to the line of duty, I can do anything to assuage thy grief, my poor youth, or to assist thee in any particular, I shall be only too happy to do it," replied the sexton, in a tone of unfeigned sympathy. "So speak freely, my son, and let me know how I can serve thee."

"I desire to gain admittance into the tomb where my lost love is lying," returned Antoine. "Do me but this favor,

father, and I will bless thee with my latest breath."

"Your request is as unreasonable as to grant it is impossible," returned the old sexton, in a tone of sorrow. "Grief has turned thy brain, and rendered thee reckless. Get thee to thy home, and to bed, my poor boy, or thou wilt be a fit subject for the mad-house before many days roll by."

"I shall be a fit subject for the grave ere to-morrow, if thou dost not grant my request," returned the youth, earnestly. "Dost thou think, old man, that I can sleep with this dead weight in my bosom? As well mightest thou recommend repose to one undergoing the torture of the rack I tell thee, father, I must see my love to-night, or I shall be a raving maniac ere morning! Let me but look upon her sweet face once again, and press my lips to hers, and I will depart quietly—and nobody need know that I had the precious privilege. If thou dost feel for me the sympathy which thou dost affect to feel," he continued, clasping his hand and fixing upon the old sexton a look of pitiful entreaty, "I implore thee grant me this one favor!"

"Thou art distracted, my son," replied the old sexton, mournfully, "but I suppose no harm will come of granting thy request, and so thou shalt be gratified. Come with me." And donning his coat and hat he lighted a lantern and the two set forth in the dark together.

CHAPTER II.

Some two months subsequent to the events narrated in the first chapter, a grand ball commemorative of some important event in French history, took place in the gay capital. It was largely attended by all the first citizens of Paris as well as by a large number of the nobility.

Among the latter was the old Marquis De Laporte, who had not yet ceased to mourn for his fair bride, and who had attended the ball more to get away from his somber thoughts than from any other motive.

The dance progressed. Wit and repartee was heard on every side from the most brilliant representatives of Parisian society, and the enjoyment was at its height, when suddenly the Marquis De Laporte, who sat conversing with a friend started as though he had received an electric shock; and seizing his companion's arm asked excitedly:

"Count, who is that lady hanging on the arm of young Damas? Do you know her?"

His friend fixed his eyes upon the lady to whom his attention had been called, and after a careful scrutiny replied:

"Her countenance is very familiar to me, my dear marquis, and but that I know the thing is impossible I would swear she was Pauline Latourette, your recently deceased wife!"

"I would not trust my own eyes," returned the marquis, with no less excitement than before, "for my imagination conjures up her face in every woman. I look at, and I did not know but I might be mistaken. She is certainly singularly like my dead darling! I must be introduced to her. I could not sleep to-night otherwise." And rising from his seat he approached the couple.

"Good evening, Monsieur Damas," he said, as he reached them—"it is some weeks since I saw you last, and I am rejoiced to see that you are looking much better than you did. Have you been traveling?"

"Not far," retorted young Damas, who looked much embarrassed, "I have been

a little way into the country—that is all!"

"And there I suppose you made the acquaintance of your fair companion, eh?" asked the marquis, as he fixed a searching gaze upon the young lady, who, although she tried hard to preserve her self-control, trembled in every joint. "Come, Antoine, introduce me!"

"This is Mademoiselle Duval, a cousin of mine," returned young Damas, unhesitatingly—then turning to the lady, he added: "Cousin Antoinette, this is the Marquis De Laporte, an old friend."

The lady bowed gracefully, but flushed crimson as she did so, and the old marquis, after regarding her in silence for some time, said:

"You will pardon me, mademoiselle, but you bear so close a resemblance to my dead wife that I cannot help regarding you with more scrutiny than strict etiquette would perhaps warrant."

"I feel flattered to be told by so distinguished a person as the Marquis De Laporte that I resemble his wife," returned the lady, smiling; "but is not resemblance purely imaginary on your part?"

"Imaginary!" exclaimed the marquis, excitedly; "far from it! There is no imagination about it! Why, the voice itself is that of my lost Pauline, and, as I live, you have a mole on the neck in the exact place and of the same appearance that she had! This is wonderful! Pardon me, mademoiselle, but you will gratify me greatly, by giving me the particulars of your birth and parentage."

"I would do so cheerfully, marquis," returned the lady, now greatly embarrassed, "but I-I-I—"

Here Antoine Damas came to her assistance.

"Pardon me, marquis," he said, in a whisper so low that the lady did not hear him; "Mademoiselle Duval is my affianced wife. You have already deprived me of one wife and you shall not deprive me of another if I can help it! Come, cousin Antoinette, let us join the dance! Adieu, marquis!" and placing the lady's arm within his own the couple walked away.

For a moment the old marquis stood rooted to the spot and indulged in a long reverie.

He aroused himself at last, exclaiming as he did so:

"Mon Dieu! but this is very strange! The figure, face and voice exactly the same, and the mark on the neck also! What does it all mean? I must investigate! If she is in the coffin where I left here of course she cannot be here! If she is not in her coffin then she is here beyond a doubt!" And leaving the ball-room at once he bent his steps in the direction of the sexton's lodge.

Three hours later he returned to the ball-room.

His face was ghastly white and a look of stern determination shot from his piercing black eyes, as looking eagerly around he observed young Damas and his partner whirling around in the galop.

Rushing toward them like a maniac, he seized the lady firmly by the wrist, pulled her rudely away from her partner, and exclaimed in a voice so boisterous as to attract the attention of all upon the floor, as he fixed a look of burning hatred upon young Damas:

"Villain! Your heart's blood shall wash out the stain which you have put upon my honor! And you, Madame le Marquise DeLaporte, will go home with me!"

At once all was confusing. The dance was stopped and eager listeners gathered around to hear what further might follow.

"This lady," continued the marquis, "is my wife! Her death was feigned to

deceive me so that she might fly to the arms of her lover! They had the assistance of an old servitor of mine in whom I placed the utmost confidence, but the villain has paid for his treachery with his life!"

"Mon Dieu! You did not slay the sexton?" exclaimed Antoine Damas with a look of horror.

"Yes, villain!" returned the marquis, foaming with rage, "and the same sword which let out his life shall be sheathed in your bosom!"

As he spoke he drew his sword and rushed upon the youth, but the next moment he staggered and fell at full length upon the floor in a fit of apoplexy.

They picked him up and called assistance at once, but the doctor arrived too late to be of any service. The old man's soul had taken its flight.

That night Antoine and his much-loved Pauline (for she it was, as the reader most already have surmised) made their appearance at the house of Antoine Latourette, when the youth stated that he had mourned Pauline as dead, and had gained permission from the old sexton to visit her corpse in the mausoleum—that while gazing on her rigid features he discovered signs of life, and with the assistance of the sexton succeeded in resuscitating her—that then, looking upon her as doubly his, he had taken her to an obscure quarter in Paris, determined if possible to procure a divorce for her, and marry her himself—that he had attended the ball not supposing that the marquis would be there, and the rest the reader knows.

The old merchant no longer withheld his consent to the union of the loving pair, and they were accordingly united amid much rejoicing, receiving the good wishes and congratulations of "troops of friends," who showered blessings upon the head of the bride who had been "married after burial."

A young lady once married a man by the name of Dust against the wishes of her parents. After a short time they lived unhappily together, and she returned to her father's house; but he refused to receive her, saying: "Dust thou art and unto Dust thou shalt return." And she got up and "dusted."

The N. Y. Evening Post tells us that "old sailors are never so much at sea as when they are on shore." Upon which the Louisville Courier Journal remarks that "in this they are somewhat like lopspecked husbands who are never so much at home as when they are abroad."

John Bunyan was once asked a question about heaven which he could not answer, because the matter was not revealed in the Scriptures, and he thereupon advised the inquirer to live a holy life and go and see.

The rate of taxation in North Carolina for the coming year is less than four mills on the dollar, or 38½ cents on every hundred dollars' worth of property. This tax is levied by a Legislature overwhelmingly Democratic, and is in striking contrast with the Republican administration of affairs in South Carolina.

Life is divided into three terms; that which was, which is, which will be. Let us learn from the past to profit by the present, and from the present to live better for the future.

"Tom, who did you say our friend B. married?" "Well, he married forty thousand dollars—I forgot her other name."