

Orangeburg Times.

\$2 PER ANNUM, }

"ON WE MOVE INDISSOLUBLY FIRM; GOD'S NATURE BID THE SAME."

{ IN ADVANCE.

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The partnership heretofore existing between James K. Heyward and Frank P. Beard, under the firm name of Heyward & Beard, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. All accounts due the firm must be paid to Frank P. Beard, he having purchased the entire interest in the Orangeburg TIMES, and having assumed all the liabilities of the firm.

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July 2, 1872 12

SELECTED STORY.

MARIAN'S SECRET.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

It was a clear, brilliant morning in February, with the white luxuriance of the newly fallen snow gleaming in pearly ridges on all the window lintels and carved cornices of the tall brown stone house, while the blue sky overhead, dazzling and cloudless, seemed as if no storm could ever shadow its dome of translucent light.

Mrs. Ordway's family were gathered around the breakfast table in the bright room where the pink and gold walls reflected the ruby sparkle of the fire, and the brown pile of the costly carpet deadened your footstep like the russet moss of some secluded forest dell—a breakfast table whose silver urn, cut glass and transparent china indicated the easy circumstances of those who sat around it. The matron herself was fair and rosy, with delicate blue cap-ribbons, and a morning toilette of lustrous blue silk, while Agnes Ordway, her eldest child, was dark and handsome as a gipsy. She knew it, too, this haughty, brilliant Miss Ordway, and had carefully studied her peculiar style in the pink merino wrapper that she wore, with its trimmings of swansdown and fluttering rose-colored ribbons.

Two little blue-eyed girls of eight and nine years old were sitting opposite, under the ministering charge of a slender young creature in a quiet brown merino dress and black silk apron, whose timid race and shrinking mien betokened the position she held in Mrs. Ordway's family. Miss Ward was only a governess—a solitary orphan, whose rare accomplishments and unconscious grace of manner were bartered for two hundred and fifty dollars a year.

Yet she was very pretty, with straight features and hair of the radiant, glimmering gold that artists rave about, while her liquid brown eyes, large and shy as those of a young gazelle, seemed to melt and deepen at every emotion that stirred the service of her mind. Generally Marian Ward was quite pale, but to-day there was a strange, bright flush on her cheeks, and her slender hands trembled nervously as she attended to the unintermitted wants of her two small charges.

"Miss Ward! really I am quite astonished at you this morning!" exclaimed Mrs. Ordway, drawing herself up rather stiffly. "I have asked you twice for another cup of coffee, and you pay not the slightest attention to my solicitations. May I inquire if you are indisposed?"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Ordway," faltered poor Marian turning red and white, while her trembling fingers fluttered about the silver foscet of the coffee-urn; "I did not hear you—I will endeavor to be less absent-minded in future."

The mollified matron sipped her amber-clear coffee as she turned to her daughter:

"Well, Aggie, you haven't told me about the party last night. Who was there? and what news did you pick up?"

"Everybody was there," returned Agnes, trifling with the handle of her cup. "It went off charmingly—and I gathered one piece of information that was creating quite a sensation in the beau monde."

"Yes? What was it?"

"Nothing less important than the engagement of Mr. Delaval."

"Is it possible?" ejaculated Mrs. Ordway, biting her lips. "To Miss De Cray, of course?"

"No—not to Miss De Cray."

"Agnes, how strange you look! Miss Ward, don't you see that Melanie has her fingers in the butter—do pray attend to your business! Surely, Aggie, it is not you who have won the best match of the season?"

"Don't talk nonsense, mamma!" said the dutiful daughter, sharply. "No, it is not I!"

Marian Ward rose to her feet in trembling agitation.
"Mrs. Ordway—if you would kindly excuse me—"

"I cannot think of it, Miss Ward—the children have by no means finished their breakfast, and—"

But Marian was gone before Mrs. Ordway had concluded her methodical sentence.

"I don't blame her for running away," said Agnes, laughing. "Mamma, May Delaval is engaged to Marian Ward!"

"To Marian Ward!" shrieked the astonished matron—"to—my—governess?"

"Even so," assented the dark beauty, calmly.

"And this is the meaning of his frequent visits to our house—of the devoted attention he has always paid to yourself and me! And Marian Ward was laying wicked snares for him the whole time! The designing, artful little hypocrite, with her great eyes, and her voice you could scarcely hear. I will teach her the consequences of such conduct. I will—"

"Gently, mamma, gently," said Agnes, with a slight motion of her head toward the open-mouthed children, who were eagerly drinking in every sentence that fell from the maternal lips. "Really, if May Delaval chooses to fall in love with Miss Ward, I don't see that it constitutes any crime on her part. Take my advice, mamma, and remember that whatever relations you may have sustained toward Marian Ward, Mrs. Delaval will be a person of some consequence in the fashionable world."

And Mrs. Ordway could not but acquiesce in the worldly wisdom of Agnes's view, even while her inmost heart swelled with indignation at the idea of Mr. Delaval's heart having been won by so insignificant a personage as—her children's governess.

"Tell me, cara mia, do you love me?" Now this was a very ridiculous question, inasmuch as Mr. Delaval was well assured of the matter beforehand, but somehow he liked to hold the slender hand in his, and took into the melting brown eyes, and see the color come and go on the pure cheek, as she confessed, with such shy grace, that she did love him.

"And you are happy now, Marian? Dearest, you told me once that you had never known what happiness was."

"I am happy, May, so happy that I feel as if it must all be a dream. No one ever loved me but you, May."

"My poor little lonely darling. Mrs. Ordway once told me that you had no relatives living. Stay, though; she said something of a brother who had joined the army. My dearest, why do you turn so pale? Has he too gone?"

"Yes—I have lost him," faltered Marian, growing scarlet and white alternately. "Oh, May, please don't ask me any more questions."

"Pardon me, love," whispered the young man, soothing down the gold tresses with a tender touch. "Hereafter my love shall atone for all that of the dear one you have lost."

As she looked up, smiling through her tears, Agnes Ordway came into the room.

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Mr. Delaval, but there is a man below with a note that he will deliver into no hands but those of Miss Ward."

Marian slipped away, glad of an excuse to hide her flushed cheeks from Miss Ordway's searching black eyes. She was gone scarcely ten minutes, yet when she returned, those same cheeks were whiter than monumental marble.

"Marian," exclaimed her lover, "what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Ill? No," she returned, in an absent mechanical sort of way. "Why do you ask?"

"Because you look so strange and pale."

"Am I pale? I am quite well. But, May, I cannot go out with you this afternoon."

"Not go out with me, Marian? But you promised, love."

"I know it, but—but I have changed my mind."

"Nay, dearest, you surely do not belong to the capricious coquettes whose minds vary with every hour in the day? I must have you this afternoon, love."

I have promised to take you to my mother's house; she will think it more than strange if you shrink from the appointment."

"To-morrow, May; indeed I cannot go to-day."

May Delaval's brow darkened a little. "You say you are well, Marian?"

"Yes, but—oh, May, don't speak so coldly to me!"

She burst into tears, and the very sight of those bright drops dispelled the gathering clouds of Mr. Delaval's displeasure at once.

"Let it be as you please, darling; to-morrow will do equally well for our ride. And now, seal my forgiveness with a kiss."

Long after her lover had taken his reluctant departure, Marian Ward sat motionless in the same attitude—one hand drooping at her side, and the large wifely eyes gazing into space. At length she started up with an effort.

"I must not sit here!" she moaned. "Oh, I was so happy—so happy—and now—"

She went upstairs into her own room, and opening the well-worn desk, counted out forty-five dollars—all that remained of the last quarterly instalment of her salary.

"It is not enough," she pondered, with a despairing pang at her heart. "I must have ten dollars more."

There was little enough in the scanty jewelry she had inherited from her mother—two or three rings of no great value, and an old-fashioned pin containing hair, whose rim was studded with a circle of rice pearls.

"Mother!" she murmured, pressing the antique trinket to her lips, "I thought never to have parted with this, yet I think even you would bid me sell it now?"

She folded the pin in a bit of paper, and placed it carefully in her purse. Then wrapping her gray shawl about her and tying the faded strings of her brown silk bonnet, she stole softly down stairs.

"Going out, Miss Ward?" ejaculated Mrs. Ordway, smoothly, as she met her little governess in the hall; "won't you take the carriage?"

"Thank you—I prefer to walk," said Marian, feeling the hot blood surging up to the very roots of her hair.

"Or perhaps you would like Aggie to accompany you? I'll speak to her in one instant."

But Marian's gloved hand checked Mrs. Ordway's oily movements.

"No; I would rather be alone, I shall soon return."

She hurried down the street with a beating heart, feeling like a guilty creature and never paused until she had reached a second-rate little jewelry store, where, a dozen clocks were all ticking discordantly together, and an old man sat in the window, peering through a double magnifying glass at the works of some valetudinarian watch.

"What can I do for you, Miss?" he asked leaving his perch, and slowly coming forward to the counter.

"I want to sell this pin—that is the setting of it," said Marian, in a low, stifled voice.

"How much will you give me for it?"

"Pearls, eh?" said the old man, again taking up his magnifying glass, the better to scrutinize the gems. "And I guess they must have been valuable in their time. Pretty well kept, too. Well, young woman, what'll you take for 'em?"

"Are they worth ten dollars, sir?"

The old man looked at her keenly. There was a momentary struggle between honesty and self-interest in his breast ending in a compromise.

"They are worth that and more Miss; I'll give you fifteen for 'em. Will you wait for the hair to be taken out now?"

"Not now—I will call again," faltered Marian, holding out her hand for the fifteen dollars, which the old man slowly counted out.

Down the snowy streets, through narrow thoroughfares and noisome alley-ways now threading a precarious passage among contending carts and hacks and drays, and now stealing along in shadow of mouldering, ruinous walls, went

Marian Ward, her heart fluttering like a caged bird, until she reached a shabby three-story house, whose door, creaking on its hinges, gave an ample view of the carpetless hall and bare stairways. A fat, bald-headed man started from the angle of the entry as she came in, as if he had been some old spider lying in wait for unwary prey.

"Miles Kepler?" she asked, in a scarce audible voice.

"Kepler? Miles Kepler? repeated the man, staring insolently into her face. "Yes, he's at home. Did you want to see him, pretty one?"

"If you please, sir," faltered Marian, shrinking yet closer to the wall.

"Well, then just go up to the third floor and knock at the second door on the left, and you'll be sure to find him." I only wish I had such a pretty looking visitor!" he chuckled.

But Marian had not observed, neither had Mr. Noah Meeker, an eager auditor to their brief colloquy in the person of a tall man, in a surcoat lined with costly sables, who had paused at the foot of the steps, apparently stricken motionless by the voice of the young girl.

"I cannot be mistaken," muttered May Delaval to himself, "and yet—my Marian in a foul den like this—impossible! Still it was her voice, her figure. Can it be possible that any human being could so closely resemble her? As surely as I live and breathe, I will not leave this house until the matter is decided."

He boldly ascended the steps, and pushed forward into the doorway. Mr. Meeker interposed his portly length and breadth before him.

"Hold on a minute, sir. Did you wish to see ME?"

"Let me pass, man!" said Delaval angrily turning on him, "or it may be the worse for you."

Meeker shrank back—he recognized the voice and eye. It was scarcely a week since there had been an awkward investigation of his means of gaining a livelihood at the instigation of Mr. Delaval, one of whose clerks had been guided to his ruin by the artful villain; and he still retained a very lively remembrance of the same.

"Certainly, sir," he said, in a subdued voice. "Can I give you any information?"

"I want to find Miles Kepler," said Delaval, shortly.

"Miles Kepler!" repeated Meeker, with a low whistle. "Well, for a gent as didn't want to see company, he does have many visitors. Third floor, second door on the left, sir."

It was rapidly growing dusk in the dark entries of the dirty house, and Mr. Delaval could just grope his way up. The "second door on the left" was half way open, and by the dim light that streamed through one dingy window, he could see Marian Ward's pale face uplifted to a dark, swarthy visage, whose mustache almost touched her forehead.

This, then, was Miles Kepler; and Miles Kepler's arm was round her slender waist, and the light hand lay on his shoulder?

May Delaval could feel the blood curdling into ice around his heart, as he looked upon this strange group for one instant—then turned away.

"I am satisfied," was his mental comment. "No further evidence is needed. And I—I have been a blinded, befooled dupe!"

Noah Meeker looked after him, as he strode away into the brooding twilight, muttering to himself:

"It wasn't a very long call you made on Mr. Miles Kepler, anyhow."

The gas was lighted in Mrs. Ordway's hall when Marian Ward returned, and the servant who admitted her pointed to a note on the Gothic table.

"It just this minute came, Miss Ward. I was going to take it up to your room."

Marian broke the seal with a deep flush on her cheek—she had already learned to recognize her affianced lover's handwriting; but the flush faded into ashy parlor as she read the few brief words on the crumpled paper:

"When I asked Miss Ward to become my wife, I did not know I had a rival in Mr. Miles Kepler. Miss Ward was

obliged to break her appointment with me in order to pay Mr. Kepler a visit. Hereafter I relinquish to him all my claims upon her heart or hand. M. D."

Marian stood an instant as if a thunderbolt had paralyzed her whole being, then murmuring, "It must not be—no, it cannot be!" she ran up stairs to her room, heedless of Mrs. Ordway's eager inquiries.

Kneeling on the floor beside the table, with her bonnet still unremoved, she hurriedly wrote a few brief lines, indistinct and blotched with tears:

"Come to me, May! I can explain it all, if you will but give me an opportunity. Only come to me! Your love was all I had in the world—I cannot lose it this."

Marian.

"Joseph," she said to the servant, "will you carry this note to Mr. Delaval for me."

"Directly, Miss Ward."

"This instant."

"Yes, ma'am."

Joseph went on his errand with promptitude and departed; yet to poor Marian every second seemed an hour, as she there sat counting the pulses of her own miserable heart. Presently Joseph opened the door.

"Mr. Delaval, Miss!"

And as she looked up, with her eyes dimmed by thick-coming tears, May Delaval was standing before her, cold, pale and haughty.

"I have obeyed your summons, Miss Ward; you will oblige me by being as brief as possible!"

"Oh, May! don't speak so to me!" she sobbed.

"How else can I speak?" he asked, in a tone that was somewhat softened, "after—after your interview of this afternoon. Marian, had an angel of light warned me of this, I could scarce have believed him."

"Listen to me, May," she said, passionately. "For the sake of retaining my place in your good opinion, I will reveal what should be a secret to all the world, save yourself. I will put into your hands the life I would fain shield with my own."

"I am listening," he said, coldly.

"May," pursued Marian Ward, "Miles Kepler is my brother."

"Your brother?"

"I said I had lost him," she went on, with burning cheeks and set lips. "I should have said he had lost himself—to duty, honor, and his native land. He was in the army—he deserted, thereby rendering himself liable to the awful penalty of death. Now you have my secret. May, for the sake of the mother who prayed above us both, do you think I did wrong in trying to shield him from disgrace and death? In giving him money to flee the country under an assumed name? Henceforward he is as dead to me and all who once knew and respected him as if the grave had closed over his head. And now, if you choose to break our engagement, May Delaval, you are at liberty to do so. I have done what I deemed to be my duty—not even for your precious love could I do otherwise."

May Delaval's face had glowed into sudden brightness; he folded her in his arms with a tender pride too deep for outward expression.

"Marian! my own love! I have been a villain ever to doubt you. But it is the last shadow that shall ever rise between us. Henceforward I will strive constantly to be worthy of your love."

And, months afterwards, when poor Harvey Ward, safe under the fictitious appellation of "Miles Kepler," was domiciled beneath the broad sky of another climate, and the great dread off from Marian's heart, she never could think of that dreary winter's afternoon without an involuntary shudder.

"I had so nearly lost you, May," she said, clinging nervously to her husband's hand.

"And I had so nearly sacrificed my life's happiness to a blind phantasm of jealousy," said May, caressingly. "Tell me, little wife, are you happy now?"

And Mrs. Delaval's brown eyes, swimming in liquid light, made a sweet reply.