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An Interesting Story.

MY FIRST LOVE.

II.

The next day, and one or two that succeeded, were spent in riding, driving, walking, or in home amusements, according to the state of the weather. But no matter what the occupation which took up our time, I continued my assiduous to Lady Maria, the daughter of a poor earl, but the heiress to a distant relative's wealth and estates.

Tom was equally attentive, but I am bound to say that his attentions were not equally well met. My heart began to beat as I found myself the favorite. Wild visions of the future began to cross my brain. I wanted a few months of being of age, when I should become my own master and that of a small property I had from my mother.

No selfish reflection on the folly of marrying on three hundred a year entered my head. That was precisely my income, besides my pay. I thought I could live upon it; and even so blissful did the prospect seem, that I actually determined to sell out rather than delay my happiness. I believed in but one thing—my love, ardent, devoted and sincere, for Maria.

Men, and women too, have the cruel courage to laugh at these early passions, and to cover them with ridicule. It is possible that many, perhaps the majority of youths, are incapable of feeling love endurable and eternal as so early a period of their career. On this point I am incapable of giving an opinion. But this I do know, that in my case it was the one passion of my life. I felt as keenly, as deeply, as devotedly as ever mortal man did feel—more keenly, I do believe, than those whose blunted feelings are in after life attracted by beauty and grace.

Life had no charm, existence no delight save her. Others thought so, too; and, as I was aware of my brother's preference, I brought the affair to an issue.

It was Christmas eve. The day was lovely. The snow was hard and crisp and dry. Shakespeare's line would truly not have applied, for no

"Rain and wind beat dark December."

We had walked out. I, as usual, by the exercise of a little maneuvering, had Lady Maria on my arm. My brother Tom, who was slower in his movements, was forced to content himself with sister Fanny.

I suppose he did not wish to appear to watch us; so as we came to Dilcot Lane he turned to the right as we turned to the left. The paths met about a mile below. Our path was down a valley, with rows of dark fir-trees on either side—a sheltered pleasant place it was in the summer, and not without its attraction in the winter, even if its being free from gusty wind puffs were alone considered. About a quarter of the distance was passed over in silence. I could not talk. Lady Maria tried me once or twice. I answered her in monosyllables. At length she began the conversation in a tone of tender and considerate I could not but respond.

"Dear Harry," she said, "are you not well?"

"Well enough in body."

"What!" cried Lady Maria, in her joyous tone, "something pressing on your mind? Can you find no physician! Can I do anything?"

"You and you only," I said very gravely.

She looked at me with a keen and penetrating glance, which I shall never forget. She turned pale as she did so, and bent her eyes upon the ground.

"Well, Harry," she said, sadly.

"Maria, it is no use my disguising the truth any longer. I love you—I love you with all my heart and soul. Nay, do not interrupt me. From the very first evening I came home my senses have left me. I am wild with intense, earnest passion. Mine is no day's fancy. I have cast my whole soul upon this issue—you or nothing. With you this earth would be the most joyous of earth; without you, a dreary waste. I have not spoken without reflection. Maria, I have said that I wish to succeed in life, but I begin to fancy that love is worth all ambition. I am willing to leave the army. In a few months I shall be of age; my fortune is small; but if I dared to hope that you—you—could but learn to love me, it would be enough for both."

"Harry, is it possible," said the lovely girl, with beaming eyes, "that you know not of my wealth—of my fortune?"

"Fortune?" I gasped, letting go her arm, and looking horror stricken.

"Go on," said Maria, kindly; that would make no difference to me."

"Dearest, beloved girl of my heart, pardon my presumption. I had no suspicion

that you were any other than the portionless girl I knew a year ago. Had I suspected this," I added, proudly, "I should have crushed the dawning passion within my heart; 'tis now too late—rich or poor, my heart is irrevocably gone, I should have delayed—I should have hesitated—but I feared my brother might speak first. He is somebody—I am nobody."

"Your brother, Harry, would have been rejected," said Lady Maria, dryly; "and I would not willingly offend you, but you must let me think this but a burst of boyish passion."

I staggered as she spoke.

"No! I was a boy when I came here—a happy, merry, careless boy—I am now a man, and you have made me so. It remains for you to decide whether my manhood shall be one of glorious happiness, or whether I become a desperate and hopeless wretch, whose career upon earth heaven in its mercy will shorten."

"Don't! don't!" she cried, "don't say such wicked things."

"They are not wicked, Maria. It is even so. Like the gambler I have unwittingly placed my whole existence on the hazard of a die—death or life upon a woman's smile. You may try to deceive yourself, but you must believe me. When once a man's eyes have fixed themselves in love upon you, it is forever."

"Harry Harcourt," said Lady Maria, quickly, "I would not believe it true for all the wealth of the Indies."

"Why?" said I, trembling as if with the ague.

"Because I can never be yours," she continued with a deep sigh.

"You do not love me," I gasped.

"Harry Harcourt, why press me on this painful subject? I tell you plainly that I can never—no, never be yours."

"But why?"

"I am engaged to another, and shall be married in a month."

"Ah! I suspected it—my brother!" I shrieked.

"No; to one you do not know, and whose name in your present humor, I would rather not mention."

"Heaven have mercy on me! Is this reality, or some horrid dream! Can it be true?—another's!"

"I am very sorry, Harry!" she said in her softest, tenderest tone; "I should not have come had I suspected —"

"Sorry, sorry," I cried, "sorry, indeed! Why, 'tis but a boy's heart broken—nothing more. But—but—is this engagement irrevocable?"

"I have been engaged this twelve months," faltered poor Maria, who really did feel for me.

"And you love him?"

"He is a man of noble character; a man to respect rather than love. He is much older than I am—and yet I had looked forward with delight to our union as of one wise and discreet, promising great happiness—until just now."

"Until just now," I repeated.

"Yes, Harry—if that is any satisfaction to you—know that I regret my precipitancy; I should have seen more of the world ere I tied myself. Do not mistake me. Your passion takes me by surprise, but had I been free, gratitude, pride—for you a noble fellow, Harry—would probably have led me to return your generous, your disinterested affection. It is now too late. My word is irrevocably given, and to talk even of what might have been is a crime. Not another word, Harry, or I leave you. Calm yourself, or every body will be talking about us. I shall leave as soon as possible. Would that I had not come!"

I was stunned, overwhelmed and annihilated, I felt like some guilty wretch condemned to die. I knew that hope there was none. Lady Maria Templeton would not have been so hard, but to temper her refusal. Another's! It was fearful to think of—it was maddening, and it nearly drove me mad. When I joined my brother and sister I tried to rally. It was but a faint attempt. It was no consolation for me to know that evening Lady Maria refused him also. I pitied him; I pitied any one who had to endure the torture of her smile, and knew it was another's.

I believe earth has no such other pain as this. How I passed over that Christmas eve, and how I endured that Christmas day, I know not. I heard the siren's voice, but I understood it not.

It was very late, and the merry party was about to break up. I had made my arrangements to start at day-break.

"Lady Maria," said I, in as stately a manner as I could assume—it was very unkind and very ungenerous, but I could not hold it—"I come to wish you good bye. I leave to-morrow morning to join my regiment."

"So soon," she replied, raising her eyes brimful of tears to mine. "Why go? The

Christmas merry makings are not over; and who knows, ere the new year, you may be heart whole or happy!

"Never—I must go," I said, coldly.

"Harry," she replied, meekly, "do not go. Your father, brothers, sisters, will all blame me. You were to stay until Twelfth day."

"I cannot endure this torture—it is too much," I cried.

"Harry, Harry, stay for my sake—or rather I will go."

"I will not allow it. My departure is irrevocably fixed —"

"Infatuated boy!" said she, and turned away to hide her tears.

Before a week I had exchanged into a regiment on the verge of departure to India.

I spare the reader my campaigns in India. I arrived there in a desperate mood. I had rejected the advances of the young ladies who accompanied me on my journey. I hated the sight of a woman. I landed a misanthrope—disappointed, and glad to follow a career that promised early death.

At the end of this time I was invalided home. I was very ill; wounds and cholera had laid me as low as they well could. During the whole time I never wrote home once, and received no letters. I had my income unspent at my banker's. I determined to die comfortably, so traveled overland to Marseilles, and thence to Paris. I felt that I had not many months to live, so took up my quarters at the Hotel des Princes. As an invalid I engaged an apartment on the first floor—expensive, but very comfortable.

I was selfish, morbid, valetudinarian, full of fancies and monomanias; a tyrant to my servant, disagreeable to all around me. What cared I? The world and I had no further relation. I was dying.

On my arrival in Paris I had some spare cash, but drew on my London agents for more, after advising them of my arrival. I bade them transfer any balance which might be due to my bank in Paris. I received an answer by return of posts:

"The balance due to you and now in our hands is seventeen thousand and some odd pounds. Are we to transfer the whole amount to your account, or will you draw for whatever you require? We shall feel highly honored by the latter course, which will show your intention of continuing our service."

What on earth did they mean? The men must have lost their senses.

I turned to the back of the letter—"Sir Henry Harcourt, Bart."

"My father and brother dead!" I cried involuntarily. I hastened to my bankers.

"Were you not aware, Sir Henry?" said L—, the banker.

"Had not the slightest idea. Excuse me, I will call again."

And I hurried back to my hotel in a mood of mind which may be more readily imagined than described. My father and mother died believing me an undutiful son and a bad brother, when I was but engrossed in the web of a hopeless passion.

I had sisters, a station to keep up. I coldly resolved to marry some English girl, and in the peace and tranquility of a country life to forget my sorrows. Or I would get Fanny and Mary married, and be the good brother and uncle. At all events, I would do something. Strange that I no longer thought of dying. My head, however, was in a great whirl, and I felt rather faint. Hurrying on, I reached my hotel, hastened up stairs, opened the door, and sank upon a sofa. I believe I did not faint, but sleep soon overcame me. It was nearly evening when I awoke, and I saw I was not alone. Two females sat in conversation by the window. It must be my two sisters. I started to my feet.

"Sir Henry," said a low voice.

I shivered all over.

"Lady Maria," I replied, in cold and freezing accents, "this is an honor I little expected, and which I must say I can scarcely appreciate."

"Nay, Sir," said she, a little, and only a little, haughtily, "it is I who have to demand an explanation. These are my apartments. I returned just now, and you may imagine my bewilderment on finding a gentleman fast asleep on my sofa—my delight on finding it was you."

"Delight, madam!" I said, for I was firm and collected now; "I can scarcely understand your delight at meeting your victim, and lest you should find an explanation of your words difficult, allow me to retire."

"Stay one moment," exclaimed Lady Maria. Though pale, she was more beautiful than ever; there was a soft melancholy in her eyes which I dared not minutely examine. "One moment, Sir Henry. Have you received no letter from Fanny?"

"Not from one living soul, madam. I did not give my address to any one. I hurried from place to place, and never, if I could help it, visited the same locality twice."

"Then why have you come here?"

"To die!"

"To die! You are as well as ever you were in your life."

"Madam, from that hour when in your seductive society, I learned the fatal art of love, I have never known one moment's happiness or health. In sickness, in battle on the field, in the tent—I could find no rest. Your image was ever there. I chased the tiger and the wild elephant, in the hope by such savage amusement to blunt my feeling, but in vain. Behold, madam! for once a man who for four years had been dying for love—four years!—During this time what have you been doing?"

"Waiting for you, Harry," said the siren, with her soft eyes full of tears.

"Waiting for me, madam!" I cried, in a towering passion; "are you then—a widow? Worse—worse—than a wife?"

"I never married, Harry," she continued, meekly.

"Never married!" I gasped.

"Never married, infatuated boy! You little knew that young as you were, you had awakened in my bosom, feelings which I dared not avow. I was an affianced wife. Still I did not give up all hope. I determined to confess all to him, to explain frankly your offer and my altered sentiments, pledging myself, however, to fulfill my part of the contract if he held me to my vow. I could not even hint this to you, and yet did I not ask you to wait—I begged you to stay. I hinted what might happen. Do you not recollect? But you wildly disappeared. Had you paused and reflected, we might have been a steady old married couple!"

It was a dream of joy I could not realize to myself. I sank on my chair half fainting. When I came to, I found Lady Maria and her aunt, Mrs. Curt, bathing my temples.

"But how came I here—in your room?" I said after some whispered words.

"Wait," said Lady Maria, blushing, "I read in the Morning Post of your arrival at the Hotel des Princes, very ill. I thought you were hurrying home in answer to a letter of your sister Fanny's, in which I had allowed her to tell you all; so I thought, as you were very ill, the nurse you wanted was—"

"Your future wife," said Mrs. Curt, laughing, while Maria Templeton blushed crimson.

"Heaven bless you," I muttered; and, catching her in my arms, I imprinted on her lips the first kiss of love, though the aunt did frown a little.

I need scarcely add that I did not die. I am happy—very happy; perhaps the happier for my trials; yet I often regret the four years of misery I endured through my precipitancy. Still, I have great reason to be grateful that the genuine passion of my life should have terminated so well, and that, unlike so many in this world, my wife should be my first love.

SUCH IS LIFE.—So lately dead! So soon forgotten. 'Tis the way of the world. We flourish awhile. Men take us by the hand, and are anxious about the health of our bodies, and laugh at our jokes, and we really think, like the fly on the wheel, that we have something to do with the turning of it. Some day we die and are buried. The sun does not stop for our funeral; everything goes on as usual; we are not missed in the streets; men laugh at new jokes; one or two hearts feel the wound of affliction; one or two memories still hold our names and forms; but the crowd moves in its daily circle; and in three days the great wave sweeps over our steps and washes out the last vestige of our earthly foot-prints.

Governor S., of South Carolina, was a splendid lawyer, and could talk a jury out of their seven senses. He was especially noted for his success in criminal cases, almost always clearing his client. He was once counsel for a man accused of horse stealing. He made a long, eloquent, and touching speech. The jury retired, but returned in a few moments, and with tears in their eyes, declared "not guilty." An old acquaintance stepped up to the prisoner and said:

"Jem, the danger is past; and now, honor bright, didn't you steal that horse?"

"To which Jem replied:

"Well, Tom, I've all along thought I took the horse, but since I've heard the Governor's speech, I don't believe I did."

"I say, Mr. Impudence, what are you doing with your hand in my pocket?"

Scene in an Arkansas Hotel.

A contributor to the Spirit of the Times, thus describes a scene at the Anthony House, in Little Rock, Arkansas:

Late one bitter cold night in December, some eight or nine years ago, L. came into the bar-room, as usual, to take part in whatever was going on. For some reason the crowd had dispersed sooner than was customary, and but two or three of the town folks were there, together with a stranger, who had arrived a half hour or longer before, and who, tired, wet, and muddy, from a long Arkansas stage ride, his legs extended, and shoes off, was consoling himself with two chairs and a nap, opposite the center of a blazing fire. Any one who has traveled until ten o'clock in a rough winter night, over an Arkansas road, can appreciate the fruition before that fireplace.

The drowsy example of the stranger had its effect on the others, and L., who took a seat in the corner, for lack of conversation was reduced to the poker for amusement. He poked the fire vigorously for a while, until it got red hot, and becoming disgusted, was about to drop it and retire when he discovered the great toe of the stranger's foot protruding through a hole in one of his socks.

Here was a relief to L. He placed the glowing poker within a foot of the melancholy sleeper's toe, and began slowly to lessen the distance between them; one by one the others, as they caught the joke, began to open their eyes, and being awakened, mouths expanded into grins, and grins into suppressed giggles—and one incontinent fellow's into a broad laugh. Closer and closer the red hot poker neared toward the unfortunate toe. The heat caused the sleeper restlessly to move his hand. L. was about to apply the poker, when a sound of creak arrested his attention. He looked at the stranger—the latter with one eye open, had been watching his proceedings, and silently brought a pistol to bear upon L. In a voice just audible, he muttered in a tone of great determination:

"Just burn it! Burn it! Just burn it, and I'll be d—d if I don't stir you up with ten thousand hot pokers in two seconds!"

L. laid down the poker instantly, and remarked:

"Stranger, let's take a drink—in fact, gentlemen, all of you."

L. afterwards said they were the cheapest drinks he ever bought.

A lady having remarked that *ave* is the most delicious feeling a wife can hold toward her husband, Fanny Fern thus comments:

Awe of a man whose whiskers you have trimmed, whose hair you have cut, whose cravat you have tied, whose shirt you have put in the wash, whose boots and shoes you have kicked into the closet, whose dressing gown you have worn while combing your hair, who has been down in the kitchen with you at eleven o'clock at night to hunt for a chicken bone, who has hooked your dresses, unlaced your boots, fastened your bracelets, and tied your bonnet; and who! has stood before your looking-glass with thumb and finger on proboscis, scratching his chin; whom you have puttered and teased; whom you have seen asleep with his mouth wide open—ridiculous!

A GOOD CHARACTER.—A good character in a young man is what a firm foundation is to the architect—whenever proposes to erect a building on it can build with safety; but let a single part of this be defective, and he goes on a hazard, amid doubting and distrust, and ten to one the edifice he erects on it will tumble down at last, and mingle all that was built on it in ruins. Without a good character poverty is a curse; with it, it is scarcely an evil. All that is bright in the hope of youth, all that is calm and blissful in the sober scene of life, and that is soothing in the vale of years, centers in and is derived from good character.

VERY GOOD.—A minister's wife says: "The first time I took my eldest boy to church, when he was two years and a half old, I managed, with caresses and frowns and candy, to keep him very still till the sermon was half done. By this time his patience was exhausted, and he climbed to his feet, and stood on these at, looking at the preacher (his father) quite intently. Then, as if he had hit upon a certain relief for his troubles, he pulled me by the chin to attract my attention, and then exclaimed, in a distinct voice: "Mamma, make papa say Amen!"

An exchange says a little child had made a stool, no two legs of which were of a length. While in vain trying to make it stand upon the floor, he looked in his mother's face and asked, "Does God see everything?" "Yes, my child," "Well," replied the son, "I guess he will laugh when he sees this stool."

MAN AND WOMAN.—The following extract is from an address delivered by Prof. Jos. Le Conte, at the Lanrens ville Female College Commencement in July last:

"It seems to me that the essential difference between man and woman in their whole natures, is perfectly illustrated by bodily conformation, and is summed up in the two words—Strength and Beauty. The essential characteristic of man—that which constitutes his manhood—is strength, bodily, intellectual, and moral (the last two being, of course, by far the most important constituents of manhood), while the essential characteristic of woman—that which constitutes her womanhood—is Beauty and Grace; Beauty of person, of mind, and of character, refinement, modesty, purity—in a word, all that ineffable grace which floats like an aroma about the person of a refined, pure-minded woman, and which, like a halo of glory, shrouds her from vulgar gaze and unholy thoughts. Beauty of person and refinement of mind and heart may and do infinitely adorn and elevate a man, but do not make him man. So if to the essentially womanly characteristics of beauty, grace, refinement, modesty, purity, and tenderness, there be added something of strength of intellect, power of will and physical courage, it may dignify, but cannot make the woman. No amount of refinement and tenderness can redeem the character of a man in whom the essentially manly characteristic of strength is wanting; and no amount of strong-mindedness can compensate in woman for the want of the true feminine virtues of grace, modesty, and purity."

TRUTH.—Truth is the basis of practical goodness; without it all virtues are mere representations wanting the reality; and having no foundation, they quickly prove their evanescent nature and disappear as "the morning dew."

Whatever brilliant abilities we may possess if the dark spot of falsehood exists in our hearts it defaces their splendor and destroys their efficacy. If Truth be not our guiding spirit we shall stumble upon the "dark mountains," the clouds of error will surround us, and we shall wander in a labyrinth, the intricacy of which will increase as we proceed in it. No art can unravel the web that falsehood weaves which is more tangled than the knot of the Phrygian king.

Falsehood is ever fearful, and shrinks beneath the steadfast piercing eye of Truth. It is ever restless in racking the invention to form some fresh subterfuge to escape detection. Its atmosphere is darkness and mystery; it lures but to betray, and leads its followers into the depths of misery.

Truth is the spirit of light and beauty, and seeks no disguise; its noble features are always unveiled, and sheds a radiance upon every object within their influence. It is robed in spotless white, and conscious of its purity, is fearless and undaunted; it never fails its votaries, but conducts them through evil report and good report—without spot or blemish, it breathes of heaven and happiness, and is ever in harmony with the Great First Cause.

The consciousness of the truth nerves the timid and imparts dignity to their actions. It is an internal principle of honor which renders the possessor superior to fear; it is always consistent with itself and needs no ally. Its influence will remain when the luster of all that once sparkled and dazzled has passed away.

GRATITUDE.—"What the beautiful flower is to the earth gratitude is to the heart of man." It is the incense of love, arising from a soul touched by divine goodness and softened by the acts of kindness shown to him by his fellow men. It is the delicious bloom of spirit that would spend itself in thanksgiving to God, acknowledging in tenderness from the heart the blessings and favors received. Like the gentle drops of rain and the warm rays of the sun, which fall upon the earth to give nourishment to the plant, and by which means the fields in spring time are clothed with rich verdure, so gratitude gives nourishment to the affections for truth and clothes the character with heavenly beauty. It makes life sweeter under every circumstance—filling it with scenes of ecstasy and driving away the scenes of grief. Our burdens are made lighter; our trials more endurable. The ungrateful man never finds a real friend to sympathize with him in his hours of sorrow; while he who is grateful finds all along his pathway those hearts are in sympathy with his own—comforting him in his scenes of gladness. Let us feel the obligation we owe to God and to one another; and let our hearts swell with gratitude to all, according to the kindness shown us, and we shall become better fitted for the life which is to come.