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Selected Poetry.

THE TWO MYSTERIES.

We know not what it is, dear, this sleep so dear and still;
The faded hands, the awful calm, the cheek so pale and chill,
The lids that will not lift again, though we may call and call;
The strange white solitude of peace—that settles over all.
We know not what it means, dear, this desolate heart pain,
The dread to take our daily way and walk in it again.
We know not to what sphere the loved who leave us go,
Nor why we're left to wonder still, nor why we do not know;
But this we do know: Our loved and lost, if they should come this day—
Should come and ask us: "What is life?" not one of us could say.
Life is a mystery, as deep as ever death can be,
Yet, oh! how sweet it is to us—this life we live and see!
Then, night they say—these wretched ones—and blessed is the thought—
"So death is sweet to us, beloved, though we may tell you naught;
We may not tell it to the quick, this mystery of death—
You may not tell us, if you would, the mystery of breath."
The child who enters life comes not with knowledge or intent;
Sadness who enters death must go as little children sent.
Sorrow is known, but I believe that God is overhead,
And as life is to the living, so death is to the dead.

—Mary Mapes Dodge.

Too Much of a Good Thing.

At a party of young people in Paris conversation happened to turn on the subject of kissing, and the question was propounded who of the young men present could boast of having given or being able to give "his girl" the most kisses. Various were the replies that question brought out. Finally a young man and the girl to whom he was betrothed held 200 frames that they could kiss 10.00 times in ten hours, providing they would be allowed to take an occasional glass of wine between. Two persons were appointed a committee to count the number of kisses, and the work began. During the second hour the kisses were not nearly as numerous, for the committee only counted 1,000. After the third hour, during which they managed to score but 750, further operations were brought to a sudden standstill. The lips of the young man were seized with a cramp, and he was carried off in a fainting condition. The girl, a few days later, was stricken with brain fever, which nearly carried her off to a land where kissing is unknown. When the people who had won the bet demanded their money the parents of the girl refused to pay her share of it. The matter was then taken to the courts, and there it was decided that the bet must be paid.

Have you ever come across a class of people who always manage to throw the blame for a wrong act on some one else, and who invariably make themselves out the injured party? They are not the most agreeable people in the world, for the simple reason that no matter what they do they always succeed in making you feel that you are the sneak thief after all. "That man," said one of these folk, "has been scolding me for an hour, and has told me at least forty times that I stole a dollar from him, when the simple truth is I only stole fifty cents. I don't want to be blamed for what I don't do."

ONLY A SEWING-GIRL; OR, A Twenty-Dollar Piece.

Reuben Harrington, Esq., was lounging before the library fire in the stylish town house of his friend, Major Leigh. He was just home from a five years' tour on the continent, for he was the fortunate possessor of half a million, and half the women in his circle were ready to drop into his mouth like ripe cherries while the other half were vigorously shaking the crimson fruit before his indifferent eyes.

For something held him back, and this very something was troubling him as he leaned his handsome head against the crimson cushions of the chair and gazed thoroughly into the glowing coals. Night was just settling down over the great city, the wind howled around the corners of the house, and gusts of sleet and chilling rain beat against the damask-draped windows. And, as the fire-light danced over the costly furniture of the room, he is wondering in a dreamy sort of a way if he shall ever love any woman as he loved Lillian Berry. He remembers distinctly her round, dimpled face, shaded by hair of a rich dun gold—hair that fell about her like a golden cloud, reminding him of the spiritual words, "the glory of women." Her father failed suddenly and died a ruined man, and from that hour Lillian had been as one dead to him, for her letters had ceased, and after his return to New York he had searched for her everywhere, but the once popular Lillian Berry, whose beauty and wealth had been an every tongue, was now utterly unknown in the fashionable world. Belle Leigh his host's handsome brunette daughter, had fascinated him with her innocent face and gentle manners, and, as he had fully given up all hopes of ever seeing Lillian Berry, he was seriously meditating on the possibility of her refusing or rejecting him, for Belle was a thorough coquette and knew how to keep her admirers on the tenterhooks of doubt. A ring at the door-bell startled him.

"Is Miss Leigh in?" inquires a clear, mellow voice, heard distinctly above the tumult of the storm—a voice which stirs every pulse in his body. He rises to his feet, then drops into his chair again as the servant admits a shabbily-dressed woman into the warm, lamp-lit hall then goes in search of his young mistress.

"Tell her I must have money to-night," said the mellow voice, as its owner sinks into a chair opposite the library door, and with her back toward Reuben, whose pulses thrill as the voice awakens some answering chord into the past. He had heard that voice before, but where or when he could not tell. He throws back his head and listens, steadily watching the silent figure before the hall register. Her hat is concealed by a brown veil, now wet and limp with the winter rain, her shall is worn and faded, and her dress is of the poorest and coarsest material. A feeling of pity stirs his generous heart as he watches the dejected figure, and his fingers instinctively find their way into his vest pocket in search of a \$20 gold piece he had placed there that morning, but he was surprised to find it gone.

"I must have dropped it somewhere," he said to himself, as the servant returned, saying, "Miss Leigh says you must wait; she has not a cent of money about her."

"Must wait! Tell her I have waited a month already," wailed the mellow voice, and the sharp profile of a youthful face is revealed, as a thin hand dashes the brown veil aside. "I must have the money for my sewing. I am half starved, my mother is dying and I will not leave this house until I get some money."

The servant turned away, and Harrington, half ashamed of his position as eavesdropper, yet powerless to move, sat as if spellbound. Miss Leigh was certainly careless, for he could not think it was any other feeling that kept the poor sewing-girl out of her wages.

Suddenly the quiet figure in the hall arose and picked up something shining from the crimson wool of a Persian rug before the register. "A \$20 gold piece," he heard her

say slyly, and he knew it was his own, "and they say they have no money."

She held her hand up to the light, and he noticed the transparent whiteness of the slender wrist.

"Shall I keep it?" was uttered in a low, bitter voice. "Heaven knows I need it. God would surely hold me guiltless if I kept this money. Ah, once I had love and warmth and gold pieces in plenty." A deep sigh was wafted to Harrington's ear, as the speaker stood with her head bowed over the precious money. He fancied he could see her waver, yet he little knew what a struggle was going on in that young girl's breast. How the miserable mother, lying on her bed in a fireless room, was thought of; the many comforts that money would purchase were next weighed in the balance, and then honesty and inborn integrity rose up against the temptation, and, with a sob that went to Reuben's tender heart, she cried out with low, mournful pathos, "No, no; I may be forced to beg, but I will not steal. Father in heaven, keep my hands clean and my heart pure, for I am sorely tried."

She laid the gold piece on the marble top of a gypsy table, and the next instant the soft rustle of silken skirts fell on Harrington's ear as Belle Leigh came down the wide stairway, a cloud on her lovely brunette face. She was elegantly dressed in myrtle-green silk, emeralds in her ears and nestling in the filly lace at her throat—a thoroughly well-bred, fashionable woman, but cruel and heartless, although Reuben Harrington thought her gentle and compassionate.

"You here yet?" she says sharply, and with a slight start the girl turned and faced Miss Leigh.

"Heaven help me!" exclaimed Reuben Harrington, as he bounded to his feet with blanched cheeks. "It's Lillian Berry; and in such need!"

"I must have some money, Miss Leigh. Our rent is due; mother is at death's door, I fear, and we have not a particle of food or fuel in the house," cried Lillian, tears streaming down her white, worn cheeks. Her beautiful hair escaped from under the rim of her hat and fell about her neck in shining ringlets. "Oh, Miss Leigh, if you know what poverty was you would not refuse me."

"Possibly not," said Miss Leigh, with a laugh that grated harshly on Reuben's ear, for he grew heartsick when he remembered how near he had been to committing himself to this woman. "But you see I am not poor and never expect to be."

"Ah, Miss Leigh, you do not know what is before you. I was the daughter of a rich, indulgent father; now, Heaven help me, I am as poor as the poorest beggar that walks the streets. Give me a little money, if you have any humanity—just a little."

"Really, I have not a cent in the house. Papa is short of funds, just now."

Reuben Harrington, standing in the ruby dusk of the library, smiled contemptuously as he thought of the \$100 bill Belle had that day laid down on the polished counter of a downtown jeweler for the very emeralds that flashed at her dainty, shell-tinted ears. "Verily, women are a vein show," he thought, "and the smiles that beguile a man into matrimony are not to be trusted."

"Look here!" said Lillian, as she picked up the gold piece and held it toward Miss Leigh. "I found this on the rug at my feet. I was tempted to keep it, but I never did a dishonest act in my life and I will not begin now. Women like yourself often leave us poor creatures no alternative but to beg or steal, but I will starve and die faithful to my principles. If this is yours, pay me with part of it."

Miss Leigh took the money and coolly dropped it into her pocket, while Harrington almost shivered with disgust.

"It's mine, but indeed I can not spare a cent of it. You must wait until next week," said Miss Leigh, crossly.

"Next week," moaned Lillian Berry turning away with a white, hopeless face. "Father, help me, for I am in sore need."

past Miss Leigh and laid a hand on her arm. All the better feelings of his nature were aroused, and his fine face was crimson with indignation.

"Miss Leigh, I am ashamed of your cruelty. Five years ago this girl was rich, honored and beloved. You see to what straits misfortune, poverty and death have brought her. Have a care that your own life does not meet with a similar blight. Lillian, my first and only love, do you not know me?"

Lillian, with a rosy blush creeping into her cheeks, looked up shyly into the bronzed and handsome face of her old-time lover.

"Reuben," she murmured, bursting into a flood of tears. And as Belle Leigh, rebuked and chagrined, shrank away out of sight, Reuben took the golden head on his bosom and told Lillian how he had given her up for lost, and that her struggles for bread were over, for the shelter of his heart awaited her.

"Just to think," sneered Belle Leigh, a few days later, "that a man like Reuben Harrington should throw himself away on a poor sewing-girl."

But Belle found that society opened its arms to welcome the poor sewing-girl, who, happy in the restored health of her mother and a good husband's love, blossomed into a noble, beautiful woman, whose purse and heart always opened to the poor and needy.

Belle Leigh frets out her days a discontented old maid, who despises sewing-girls and twenty-dollar gold pieces.

"For, through one or both, I lost the best catch of the season," is her grumbling comment.

Eight Thousand a Year.

Despotie papa declared that Brown should not marry his charming Emily—beatrix to eight thousand a year—unless he was wealthy.

"What is your fortune, sir?" he asked magisterially.

"Well I don't exactly know," said Brown, who was as poor as a church mouse; "but let your daughter become my wife, and I promise that she shall have endless gold."

"Endless gold is rather an exaggeration, eh?" remarked papa, rather surprisingly.

"Scarcely in my case," said Brown, "as my wife and I, be as extravagant as we might, should never be able to get through it."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"The truth, I vow it!"

"Then take her, my boy," said papa, grasping Brown's hand; "and happy am I that my child has been saved from the clutches of fortune-hunters."

Well, they were married, and Brown made the money fly at such a rate that when his wife's milliner's bill came in he was obliged to confess himself stumped.

Mrs. Brown immediately sent for her papa.

"What's this?" said papa. "What do you mean, sir? Where's the endless gold you promised, eh?"

"I've kept my promise," answered Brown. "I gave your daughter endless gold when I married her—a wedding ring. And, my dear," added Brown, turning to his wife, "do you think that both of us could ever get through anything which only just fits one of those taper fingers?"

Papa looked as if he was going to have a fit, but a remark of his daughter's averted the catastrophe.

"Well, papa," she said, "there's still one thing in our favor. No one can say that I've got an idiot."

So the storm blew over; and now Brown and his wife, though they do have to manage on eight thousand a year, are the happiest couples in the two hemispheres. Still, the bridegroom admits that his was rather a risky experiment.

Julius, were you ever in the business?—What business? A sugar planter. In course I was. When was dat, my coloured friend? De day I buried dat old sweetheart of mine.

An Irishman recommending a cow, said she would give good milk year after year without having a calf, because it ran in the breed, as she came from a cow that never had a calf.

Poor Outlook for Contractors.

Those who have taken big contracts at the low prices for labor and materials are likely to have a hard time of it. Messrs. Herter & Co., who have the contract for building and furnishing W. H. Vanderbilt's new house for \$1,500,000, are threatened with a strike which may cost them many thousand dollars, there being a time clause in their contract with Vanderbilt stipulating for a penalty of \$100 a day for any delay in having it done after the first of May. I hope that Hester's experience with Vanderbilt will not be so unpleasant as was that of the unfortunate contractor who furnished the stone for A. T. Stewart's marble palace; very much happened then that is occurring now—prices and labor went up like magic. The contractor for Stewart's house, whose name I have forgotten, was caught with a contract which to carry out, meant the loss of several hundred thousand dollars; in other words ruin. He went to Mr. Stewart and showed him how the matter stood; that everything had doubled in price since the contract was signed. Stewart refused to allow one cent extra on that account. The man fell in a fit in Stewart's office and died a few days afterwards. It was perhaps this event which gave rise to the story that Stewart was haunted with the notion that he would not live long after his house was finished. Before the building was half done two men were killed by falls, and some other unpleasant things happened—a coffin was found, with a skeleton in it, in digging the foundation for the main steps. Whatever may have been the truth as to the old millionaire's superstition, it is certain that he never entirely finished the outside of his palace. He lived in the house—the most costly in America—for five years, but never allowed the temporary wooden fence in front of the stable doors to be replaced by the bronze railing which was evidently provided for in the original plan, and which has since been erected.

New Ideals of Marriage.

It is indubitable that the girl's ideal of marriage has of late years greatly changed; and the change has been produced in part by what she sees, and in part by what she reads. We entertain no doubt that the female novelists who have followed in the wake of the late George Laurence have materially modified the ideal of a suitable lover as entertained by many of their sex. "Ouida," Miss Braughton, Miss Annie Thomas, and others, have accustomed them to ferocious lovers—but we will not waste our time in repeating a description of physical peculiarities of the Adonis of the Period according to the standard of the female three-volume novel. Everybody knows the sort of hero, half Ajax, half Paris, of their monotonous pages. Grown-up people may smile at such absurdities but girls are very impressionable, and when once they have adopted such an ideal, it is not easy to expel it from their minds. The person hardly exists in real life; the nearest approach to it being any or every unprincipled man who is prepared to make "fiere love" to any fool he meets. Obviously this is not a condition of things favorable to marriage; for while it makes girls more prompt, and indeed eager, to flirt, it indisposes them to appreciate attentions of a more delicate, but more practical kind. So much for the change produced in the ideals of women by what thread. The transformation is completed by what they see. While silly novels tell them that a lover, to be worth anything, must rail against heaven and bite the grass with his teeth, the whole arrangements of society keep daily telling them that a husband is no good at all unless he has a great deal of money.

The South Carolina cotton factories give support to 10,000 persons.

When grim death gets a fair grip upon some old Republican office-holder, the conscience fund of the United States is increased. Last week Gillfillan received \$529.62 to be added to the fund. If all of the Republican scamps would own up, and shell out, there would be money enough in the Treasury to equalize the bounties to soldiers.—*Indianapolis Sentinel, Dem.*

The students of the University of Virginia have begun the publication of a monthly magazine.

The colored Good Templars in Virginia have organized a Grand Lodge for that State.

The incipient moustache on the female lip is among the ills that flesh is heir to.

Persons who are constantly saying that they are free from prejudice are generally more prejudiced than others, though they are not aware of the fact. They are like the old lady who declared that she was open to conviction, but, shaking her head, she added that she would just like to see the man who could convince her.

There is nothing in the world which better illustrates the possibilities of an enduring patience than German scholarship.

The only stimulant in which the spectacled professor indulges is a glass of beer, or perhaps a mild cigar, or better still a rare and delightful combination of both of these elements of human happiness. The American leaps where the German crawls. Still it sometimes happens that the tortoise, who plods along at an even gate, and who recognizes the grand fact that plodding is the only sure road, though it is oftentimes a long one to success, outstrips the fleet footed hare, who disports himself under the impression that a tortoise ought not to be a difficult opponent in a race. One of the most beautiful incidents in the life of Lessing suggests this line of thought. Recognizing the unspeakable happiness of the man who seeks for truth, and who once in a while finds a glistening particle, he said: "If God held in His right hand all truth and in His left the eternal striving after it, and should say to me, 'Choose, I would take what He held in His left hand, and say to Him, 'Father, give me this; pure truth is only for Thee.'"

Mr. Richard Grant White wittily remarks that "gents" and "pants" belong together for the former always wear the latter. If "gent" is to be tolerated by careful writers, then let us accept "pants" for trousers, "transpire" for "happen" or "occur," and, in brief, adopt all the variegated and wonderful vocabulary of the average newspaper.

The word "gent" however, does describe a class. When you see a greasy young fellow, who seems a cross between a rustic and a negro minstrel off duty—a person with cap set far back on his closely cropped head tight trousers that grow suddenly full at the ankle, and shoes with turned-up, pointed tips (where does he get those shoes?)—when you see this vulgar little object, you see a "gent." You will encounter him on the street corners in shabby neighborhoods, gazing admiringly at the lithograph of some famous clog dancer or cheap blonde in a drinking-shop window; you will meet him there, but Heaven preserve you from ever meeting him in decent literature!—*March Atlantic.*

Some people can say a mean thing as though it were a compliment, while others seem doomed to utter their compliments as though they were bits of slander.

Tact is the ability not only to say the right thing, but also to say it at the right time and in the right way. A gentleman lately met his fate in a zoological garden. His fate was in the shape of a beautiful young lady who was not at all averse to the possibilities of the future. She was not unwilling to spend the money of any eligible person who presented himself in the role of a husband. "Ah, my dear Adela!" he said, as the two gazed at the wild animals of the menagerie, "wherever I meet you I find that you are the greatest ornament of the place." Whether he meant that she had qualities of character superior to those of the lamb from Tartary, or other qualities resembling those of the tiger from Bengal, she did not stop to think. He went home, however, at a somewhat rapid pace, and with a sort of crushed feeling at the heart which makes it impossible for him to be quite happy.