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OLD TIME FAVORITES

THE FOOL'S PRAYER.

BY E. E. SILL.

The royal feast was done; the king
Sought some new sport to banish care,
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,
Kneel now, and make for us a prayer!"

The jester doffed his cap and bells,
And stood the mocking court before;
They could not see the bitter smile
Behind the painted grin he wore.

He bowed his head and bent his knee
Upon the monarch's silken stool;
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!

"No pity, Lord, could change the heart
From red with wrong to white as wool;
The rod must heal the sin; but, Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!

"'Tis not by guilt the onward sweep
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;
'Tis by our follies that so long
We hold the earth from heaven away.

"These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well meaning hands we thrust
Among the heartstrings of a friend.

"The ill-timed truth we might have kept—
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung!
The word we had not sense to say—
Who knows how grandly it had rung!

"Our faults no tenderness should ask,
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;
But for our blunders—O, in shame
Before the eyes of heaven we fall.

"Earth bears no balsam for mistakes;
Men crown the knave and scourge the tool
That did his will; but Thou, O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

The room was hushed; in silence rose
The king, and sought his gardens cool,
And walked apart, and murmured low,
"Be merciful to me, a fool!"

When the Plot Thickened.

Dudley explained his idea with enthusiasm.

"Something is bound to come of it," he said. "We will exchange mail for one week. You must read my letters and answer them as if they were your own, without consulting me, or even telling me their contents, and I will do the same with yours. By following up this misfit correspondence I'll be sure to get a plot."

"Quite likely," drawled Grant. "But what do I get?"

"The satisfaction of seeing me make a stake with an original story, and possibly a check, if that delinquent Boston firm comes to time."

Grant pondered the proposition doubtfully.

"It's a crazy notion," he said, at length, "but since I get scarcely any mail up town except laundry bills and circulars from local tradesmen, the chances of your prying into any of my secrets seems exceedingly slim, so I suppose I can safely accommodate you. When do you wish to put the system into operation?"

"To-morrow morning, if you're willing," said Dudley. "My imagination seems to be afflicted with a most aggravated case of dry rot these days, and the sooner I get to work on a plot from real life the better."

At no delivery on the following day were there any letters of importance for either of the friends, but in the 10 o'clock mail on the second morning there was a letter addressed to Grant that promised interesting results. The envelope bore unmistakable earmarks of femininity, and in spite of their agreement Dudley hesitated before opening it.

"It seems hardly fair to the girl," he thought. "Still——"

He looked across the table at Grant, who had finished his breakfast and was smiling over a communication to Dudley from the ponderous Boston firm.

"That settles it," growled Dudley. "He's got the check, confound him, so I might as well get even by making the most of this innocent little note."

The letter was written in a sprawling, fashionable hand, and covered several pages. Before he was half way through Dudley perceived that he had been precipitated into the thick of a plot far more unique than any he had counted on discovering.

"My dear Henry," the letter ran. "After many months of hard work I have come to the conclusion that the editing of the papers left by my late husband, General McKeever, is too big a job for me to finish alone, and I have decided to place them in the hands of some trustworthy literary man who will do justice to the General's memory. The question is, Whom shall I employ? I wish you would advise me. I know that you have a large acquaintance among writers, and it has occurred to me that you might be able to recommend some person for the place. From our previous conversations on the subject, you are tolerably well aware of the nature of the data left by the General, and consequently you will know what qualifications are essential in the man who undertakes to finish the book. The payment will be very liberal, and whoever accepts the position can well afford to lay aside all other work while engaged in this. Kindly give the matter your earnest attention, and advise me as soon as you have made a choice. Yours sincerely,

"LUELLA McKEEVER.

"Hawthorne Apartments, Sept. 2."

Dudley read the letter several times. Even after he knew it by heart he kept on reading it. Presently Grant started down town, and then he made preparations for answering it.

"She's the same old Luella," he mused, over ink and notepaper. "I've been thinking, ever since I heard that the General was dead, that I would look her up and see if she were as sweet and pretty as she used to be. This is an unparalleled opportunity. It's a blessing I made that contract with Grant. He wouldn't have recommended me in a hundred years, but I shall have no hesitancy in recommending myself. Luella refused me once, in another capacity, and she may refuse me now in this, but I certainly shall not fail through want of endeavor."

Grant's was an easy hand to imitate, and after a couple of hours' practice Dudley flattered himself that his writing would pass muster before anybody less skilled than an expert. That feat accomplished, he wrote to Mrs. McKeever.

"My dear Luella," he said. "I am very glad that you consulted me in regard to a competent literary man to finish editing the General's papers, because it gives me a chance to recommend a man whom I think remarkably well fitted for the post. Clarence Dudley is the man I mean. You have no doubt heard his name mentioned frequently of late, for he has been doing some very creditable work. Dudley is a particular friend of mine. I have known him intimately for many years, and have always found him the right sort. I have never known a man whom I have liked so well. He is, by all odds, the best friend I ever had, and if you can see your way clear to trusting him with your book you will be conferring a favor upon me personally. Aside from his attributes as an all-round good fellow, Dudley is so well equipped mentally that I feel sure he would give excellent satisfaction, and I hope you can strike a bargain with him. Let me know at once what you think of my selection. If your decision is favorable I will have Dudley call on you, and you can settle the matter to suit yourselves. Yours, HENRY GRANT."

Dudley did not view this effusion with unalloyed pride.

"It is pretty fulsome praise to sing at one's own funeral," he commented. "If she should ever find out that I am the author of the panegyric she will certainly think me too effervescent to write a history of her deceased husband. I must warn Henry to say nothing about our compact. If he should give me away my vanity would certainly prove fatal."

Grant did not come up to their rooms that night. He sent word that he should be out of town for a day or two, but that Dudley was to stick to their bargain and continue to answer his share of their mail, as usual. There was very little to answer, but it made up in quality what it lacked in quantity, for Thursday morning brought another letter from Mrs. McKeever.

"I was somewhat surprised at your choice of literary executor," she wrote. "I knew Clarence Dudley several years ago, and have rather pleasant recollections of him, but I had hardly thought that his literary qualifications are exactly what I require. Still, you seem to be in a position to judge him from every standpoint, and I will gladly grant him an interview. Before sending him to me, however, there is one point that I must make clear to you. I should have mentioned it in my last letter, but shrank from doing so. But it is too important to be put off longer. It relates to the commands of General McKeever. It was one of the provisions of his will that no one except myself or my second husband should write a line of his biography. Naturally, he preferred that I should do it without assistance, but he was not a jealous or a selfish man, and he realized that I, being a young woman, should probably marry again. If I found the book too great an undertaking to accomplish alone, and decided to marry before its completion, he expressly stipulated that my husband should carry on the work. So, you see, before entering into a literary agreement with any author I must come to an understanding with him in regard to that clause in the General's will. You will see, my dear Henry, without further explanation, that my position is most awkward. By the General's commands I am bound to see that the book is put on the market, yet I am unable to finish it myself, and am constrained to seek help only from some man at whose head I am virtually bound to throw myself in marriage. For pity's sake, Henry, help me over this difficulty. Explain the situation to Mr. Dudley as delicately as you know how. I think it much better that you, rather than I, should broach the subject. Then, if he does not positively revolt, let him come to see me. Yours, LUELLA."

Dudley spent less than ten minutes on his reply to the second note.

"My dear Luella," he said. "Dudley understands the situation thoroughly. I must say that his remembrance of you seems to be exceedingly vivid, and he is anxious to meet you again. Notwithstanding your frank criticism of his work, I still think him the very man for the place, and if agreeable to you he will call on you Saturday afternoon at 3. HENRY."

Mrs. McKeever was plainly nervous through the preliminary handshaking when they met on Saturday afternoon, but Dudley had braced himself for the occasion and acquitted himself as became the literary trustee of a noted General.

"I must confess," said Mrs. McKeever, "that I was astonished when Henry Grant proposed your name as an accomplished historian. I did not know that you aspired to fame in that direction. Furthermore, I didn't know that you and Henry were such close friends."

"Oh, yes," said Dudley, carelessly. "I've known Grant for years."

"So he tells me. He seems very fond of you. I really did not know it was possible for one man to care so much for another. I hope that your are equally devoted to him. His praise of you is unstinted. He says that you are the best friend he ever had, and that he likes you better than anybody else in the world."

"Does he?" murmured Dudley. "Dear old Hank!"

"And, besides, he is so very proud of your literary attainments. If I didn't know Henry to be such a level-headed fellow I should accuse him of gushing. I should be afraid that his judgment had been warped by the heat of friendship, and that his recommendation was not entirely reliable. However, I have decided to take his advice, and if you are willing to—to enter upon the probation which I explained to him would be required of you—why——"

She shifted her eyes uneasily. Dudley felt that he had skated safely over the thinnest parts of his duplicity, and he filled up the pause buoyantly.

"Now, see here, Luella," he said, "you ought to know pretty well how I feel about the matter. I put the question to you six years ago, and you turned me down most beautifully. I swallowed the dose, I flatter myself, with fairly good grace, but I kept on thinking of you pretty constantly, even after you married General McKeever and went to Chicago to live. Ever since you've been single again I've been aching to sound you on the subject, but I felt rather afraid of you and thought I'd better go slow. I want you, Luella, and I want to write the General's biography. Are you willing to let it go at that?"

"Yes," sighed Mrs. McKeever; "if you're satisfied, I am."

In the first thrill of victory Dudley felt that the only way he could honorably square himself was to confess his double-dealing. Many times in the course of the afternoon he was on the point of making a clean breast of it, but modesty always forbade.

"If I hadn't spread it on so thick in my own behalf I shouldn't mind," he argued. "Since I did, I think I'd better let things go as they are. I'd feel pretty sneaking to have her know that I blew my own horn so loudly."

Grant came home that evening, but Dudley was too busy pondering over the outcome of his epistolary enterprise to say much to him. Just before they went to bed he remmbered that he must caution Grant to keep their scheme a secret.

"By the way, Grant, you haven't told anybody about our exchanging letters, have you?" he asked.

Grant yawned. "No," said he, "only one person. I told her the evening the plot was hatched, but she doesn't count. She'll never say anything about it."

"She?" echoed Dudley. "Who is she?"

"Oh, nobody but Luella McKeever. She's all right."

Dudley caught his drooping head in both hands.

"Good Lord," he said. "I've got a plot, now, with a vengeance."—New York Times.

FIRST FIGHT UNDER THE FLAG.

Fought on Land, Was at Fort Stanwix New York.

The first conflict waged under the thirteen Stars and Stripes on land, after their direct authorization, is known to have been at Fort Stanwix (subsequenty re-named Fort Schuyler), in Rome, N. Y. The fort was invested by the British on the 2d of August, at which time the garrison was without the authorized standard; but they had a description of the design, and soon formed a flag from materials in the fort. Victory perched upon their rude and hastily constructed banner; and in one sortie made by the Americans they captured five of the enemy's standards.

By an order of Congress, approved by the President January 13, 1794, the flag was changed on the first day of May, ensuing, so as to consist of fifteen stripes and the same number of stars. This continued to be the design of our flag until the year 1818, when the Union embraced twenty States. On the 25th of March, in that year, on the motion of the Hon. Peter H. Wendover, of New York, Congress passed an act entitled "An Act to Establish the Flag of the United States." It read as follows:

"Section I. Be it enacted, etc., that from and after the fourth day of July next the flag of the United States be thirteen horizontal stripes alternate red and white; that the Union have twenty stars, white in a blue field.

Section II. And be it further enacted, that on the admission of every new State to the Union one star be added to the union of the flag; and that such addition shall take effect on the Fourth of July next succeeding such admission. Approved, April 4, 1818."

The flags of the United States have since continued to be of this construction; so that, whatever their variations to indicate the branch of the Government service to which a special flag belongs, every one shows by its red and white stripes the number of colonies which originally formed the nation, while its white stars in a blue ground will tell the number of States now embraced in our local Union.—George J. Varney, in New England Magazine.

The Lion of Lucerne.

A great deal of anxiety is felt in the country through the discovery that one of Switzerland's chief historical monuments—the Lion of Lucerne—is threatened with destruction. The Lion, which was chiseled from the solid sandstone rock by the Swiss artist, Aborn, in 1792, commemorates the massacre of the Swiss Guard during the French Revolution, and as a work of art is unique.

It is situated in rather damp surroundings, above a pool in the glacier garden at Lucerne, and the water has trickled through the sandstone, which threatens to crumble, and thus destroy the statue. An expert has been examining the rock, and by his advice it has been decided to cut away the surrounding rock and isolate the "Lion."—Geneva Correspondence London Chronicle.

COMMON SENSE.

O Common Sense! No diadem is thine,
And on thy plain, unsentimental face
There is no brilliancy nor hint of grace;
And yet I love thee and would make thee mine
Because thou art essentially divine.
Thou only through life's labyrinth canst trace
The true, safe path for our distracted race.
Ever to follow thee, my heart incline!
Once on the wilderness of waters wide
Brooded the Spirit, and the land's uprose,
And Chaos saw sweet order then commence.
Such is thy power; and where thou dost abide
Each moon and planet straight and stately goes;
Heaven-born, earth-saving Common Sense!

—Kate Upson Clark, in the American Kitchen Magazine.

Jingles and Jests

He—"She holds her age well, doesn't she?" She—"Yes. She doesn't look a day older than she says she is."—Philadelphia Record.

Hillis—"Whew! Why do you have your office as hot as an oven?" Willis—"It's where I make my daily bread."—Town and Country.

"He seems to be spending his life in a struggle for the unattainable." "Yes, and the first thing he knows he will be up against it."—Indianapolis News.

"Oh, Maggie, if I could only make myself believe dat he loves me for myself, an' not because me mudder keeps er fruit-stand!"—Harper's Bazar.

He dined, not wisely, but too well—
Hence all his ills;
And nothing now agrees with him
Excepting pills.

—Smart Set.

"She takes only boarders who are blue-blooded." "How does she make sure that they are?" "She bleeds them."—Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.

Small Boy—"I want to get a bale of hay?" Dealer—"What do you want with the hay? Is it for your father?" Small Boy—"No, sir. It's for our horse."—Chicago News.

Smith—"Poor fellow, he has a hard time getting along, doesn't he?" Brown—"He did for a while, but since he started downhill he finds it comparatively easy."—Chicago News.

He took two dollars not his own;
His guilt was very clear.
He took two millions and was known
As a great financier.

—Washington Star.

First Automobilist—"Are you going to take a rest this year?" Second Automobilist—"Not a complete rest. But I'm going off to the country, where there are fewer people."—Brooklyn Life.

First Decorator—"I advised him to have his house decorated during his wife's absence as a surprise." Second Decorator—"Good; then we'll have to do it all over again when she gets back."—Life.

Diggs—"Simkins gets a good salary, yet he is nearly always broke." Biggs—"What does he do with his money?" Diggs—"Spends the most of it in trying to get something for nothing."—Chicago News.

Fuddy—"There is one thing about Flanders that I like. He never has anything to say about his aches and pains." Duddy—"No; but he's all the time bragging about his splendid health."—Boston Transcript.

"Alice says that book she's reading is very good." "Yes, she even got so interested in it in the street-car that she let several women get up and go out without looking up to see how their dresses hung."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

"There, thank the stars, that's the last load! By jove, I hope we don't have to move again for twenty years!" "Look, George, there's a man with a camera! See, he is setting it us. What do you suppose he wants?" "Guess he's after a moving picture, my dear."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Depended on Advertising.

The head of a well-known baking powder company began business in a small way with a firm belief that advertising is the sure and most direct source of success. By paying as much attention to advertising as to any other part of his business he became deservedly rich.