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THE MERCHANTS TEST.

The day was yet young, when a traveler left the train at the little station at Norton, and leaving directions about his baggage with the station master sauntered leisurely up the dusty road. He had engaged Summer lodgings by letter, and was seeking his destination.

"Go straight ahead till you come to it."

This was the station master's direction, so straight ahead Lucien Gaylord proceeded, till he paused to look at a *tableau vivant*, framed in flowering vines. A girl seated upon a shady porch, shelling peas. Her broad hat was pushed back, leaving a face purely oval, delicate featured, creamy of complexion, with brown eyes and golden hair simply back in waving bands, to fall in clustering curls around the slender throat. Most unlike rustic beauty was the highbred face, the slender white hands, the self-possessed pose; but yet the dress was a quiet brown calico, with white apron, with ruffle and cuffs.

While Lucien Gaylord looked at her, she raised her beautiful eyes and saw him.

He raised his hat, asking: "Can you direct me to Miss Strong's?"

"It is here," was the answer. And opening the gate, Lucien entered, mentally concluding that the silvery sweet voice was as deliciously refined as the face.

"I am Lucien Gaylord," he said, by way of introduction.

"My Aunt Maria's new lodger.— You had better rest on the porch before I call her. It is a freshome, snappy walk from the station."

Perfectly easy, with just sufficient cordiality in the tone for welcome, Lucien accepted the invitation, watching the dainty fingers shelling peas, with a touch that was light yet firm.

Miss Strong appeared presently, and took her new lodger to his room, asking her niece to carry her pan to the kitchen.

"For we will give you an early dinner after your long walk," she said, hospitably, bustling about to bring cold water and fresh towels.

"You seat your trunk? I will have it sent up as soon as it comes."

"May I tell her niece, she is a gentleman, every inch of him, and handsome as a picture."

"I like his manner," May answered, washing her peas at the sink. "Shall I make a custard aunt?"

"If you will, dear. Oh, dear, to think of Cynthia taking this day of all others to act so."

For Cynthia, the only servant, had been detected in the act of passing spoons from the kitchen window to a villainous looking tramp, and the pair had been handed over to the village constable.

None appearing to replace the thievish Cynthia, May was often found in the kitchen, not very efficient but willing, and succeeding, in many culinary triumphs, simply by obeying orders.

"I'll make a good cook of you yet," her aunt often told her, and she laughed merrily at her words.

But Lucien Gaylord, enjoying a brief Summer holiday, often wished heartily that he might be permitted to live upon bread and milk, if by so doing he could keep May out of the kitchen.

Whenever she was free she found him waiting for her, and they sat in the porch, or walked in shady lanes, chatting pleasantly, gradually going beyond surface talk, mutually interested and pleased to find so much sympathy of thought and feeling that time sped on too swiftly when they were together.

He told her of his boyhood with a wealthy father, who died suddenly, leaving nothing of a once handsome fortune, or his mother who sank soon after under the pressure of sorrow and poverty; of his own position as a clerk in a wholesale house, upon a small salary.

Not until they were fast friends did he tell her this, and a little later he told her of a new dream, a new hope, a love, death only could destroy.

"Will you let me take back to my drudgery the hope that if I can conquer fortune, you will come to share it?" he asked. "Will you be my wife, love, in that future which I hope to gather about me at least comforts for a home?"

He had wooed her in a straightforward, manly fashion, and she was not

surprised. She put her hand in his, promising all he asked.

He went back to his desk in the autumn, but only a week later was offered a better position in the counting house of the merchant, John Burnette.

"It is so strange," he wrote to May, "Mr. Burnette himself seems so interested in me, though I am an entire stranger to him. He watches me and promotes me rapidly, seemingly pleased with all I do. Darling, if it continues, our home will be secure."

It did continue. Nearly two years had passed, when one morning Mr. Burnette called Lucien into his private office, closing the door after him.

I am about to make a strange disclosure to you," he said gravely, "and you must weigh well what I say to you. Up to this time you have known me only as a business man, to-day I speak to you as friend to friend, I am a rich man, but I have few friends, Lucien Gaylord. Shall I count you as one?"

"You honor me," he faltered, overwhelmed with surprise.

"I am a father," Mr. Burnette said, "and my only child is a daughter, whose future has been to me a subject of deep prayerful anxiety. I have feared that when I die, the wealth I leave would make her the wife of some plausible fortune hunter. I have feared that my business would fall to ruin in incompetent hands. Often I have hoped to meet at some fine an honorable, upright man, to whom I could teach the secret of my success. I have prayed that when I die, I might leave my child under the protecting care of a husband, who had not sought her for her wealth, a man of pure heart and firm principle, Lucien Gaylord, I have found the man I sought. To-day you will dine with me, and be introduced to Miss Burnette."

"If the cry broke from Lucien's lips in such utter amazement, that he thought he must dream, or that his employer was insane. "You!" was the quiet answer. "But it is all impossible," Lucien said, slowly regaining his self-possession.

"Impossible? Why so, if I am willing?"

"You will think me ungrateful, presumptuous, but I cannot accede to your noble generous plan. Faithful service, true friendship, I can give you gladly but you must seek another heir, another son-in-law. I am not free."

"You refuse my daughter?"

"I have given my love and won a heart that I could never betray."

"May I ask where?"

"My promised wife is no heiress, but a simple country maiden, lovely and gentle. I will not weary you sir with a lover's praise but you will let me say that I have worked for two years with the hope of winning some position that will enable me to offer a home to my wife. If you will put me in such a situation, you will win my warmest gratitude, but I must not think again of the dazzling offer you made me."

"You refuse to be my son-in-law—my heir?"

"I refuse any offer that makes me a traitor to a pure heart that trusts me."

"I makes it harder for me to give you up, but if I must, at least accept an invitation to dinner and my friendship."

"Gladly, gratefully," replied Lucien Gaylord.

"At six o'clock then, I shall expect you."

Was he awake?

Lucien Gaylord asked himself the question more than once as he pored over his ledgers, added long columns of figures and wrote business letters.

Had John Burnette really made him the magnificent proposals still lingering in his ears?

Were they both insane?

His head was still whirling as he dressed himself and walked toward the splendid mansion the rich merchant called his home.

He was still musing of this when Mr. Burnette himself crossed the room.

"Have you thought better of your refusal?" he asked.

"I can only repeat it sir. My heart my love are no longer at my disposal."

There was a rustle of silk upon the rich carpet, a lady advanced dressed in a shimmering lustrous silk, with jewels in her hair and upon her wrists.

A lady with soft brown eyes and golden curls, who was introduced as—

"My daughter Mable, Mr. Gaylord."

But who was surely, May, his own May, niece of Maria Strong who took Summer lodgers in a small country village.

Mr. Burnette had disappeared when Lucien moved his wandering eyes upon May's face and only the lady of his true love remained.

"You will forgive me, Lucien," she said; drawing him to a seat beside her upon a sofa if you think I have deceived you when I told you how it all happened."

"My father only spoke the truth this morning when he told you my future was the only anxiety of his life. I cannot tell you of his worshipping love for me."

"When I returned from Norton I told him of your love for me—my promise to you. Knowing you loved me for myself alone with no knowledge of my position and fortune. I begged him to send for you at once and tell you the truth."

"But next to his child my father loves the business he has built up by his own energy and talent. He wished to be sure that it will not be ruined in the hands of his son-in-law, and I consented to his test of your capacity."

"It is no small compliment Lucien, for him to tell me he is thoroughly satisfied, willing to trust the future of both his child and his business to you."

"But May are you not Mrs. Strong's niece?"

"I am. She is my mother's sister. Every Summer I spend some weeks in Norton. Still I have never performed any menial work there, except during your visit, when there was no servant. My aunt has never left her home and I take no finer to Norton, so she does not realize how different my life is here from my life with her."

"And you, who must see so many suitors, were willing to give me the treasure of your love?"

"Ah, Lucien, love is a tyrant.— He took us both under his rule in those Summer days at Norton, when I was writing to papa of Aunt Maria's lodger, and he was hoping and fearing for me. But come now to the library, and tell him you have reconsidered his offer, and will marry that unknown lady so positively refused only this morning."

There are two rosy children in the grand nursery, and already the fifth anniversary of May's wedding day has passed, but there has been no regret yet in the happy home at the result of 'The Merchant's Test.'

N. Y. Tribune: Who says that this is an ungrateful world? Three weeks ago, an old gentleman living in Paris, was so ill that he sent for a lawyer to make a will, and for several friends to whom he wished to say good-bye before dying. One of these was a young fellow who occupied an attic on the sixth floor of the same house. After the will had been signed, everyone went to the old man's bedside to say a word of comfort to him. When the lodger from the attic drew near, the dying man took both hands saying: "Do you remember when last we met? It was on the first night of 'Ernani.' I was not well then, but I rose from my bed to go and see it once more. I am now paying for my imprudence. I had no seat, only a stool at the side. You had a very good one, sir?" "Given to me by a friend, who could not use it himself," answered the young man, as if to apologize. "I know," said the old man. "I also know that, seeing me without a comfortable seat, so soon as the act was finished, you compelled me to take your stall, while you took my stool. You thereby allowed me to spend the last pleasant evening of my life. You alone, out of all that crowd, prized my white hair." When the young lodger returned on the following day, the old man was dead. He had left a parting message for his young friend, with a souvenir of their last meeting at the opera, in the form of a check for \$20,000.

ADVICE FOR 25 CENTS.

[From the Concord Patriot.]

A young man in Dover, N. H., saw an advertisement in a New York paper which read thus: "Any one sending us twenty-five cents will receive in return something which will be of immense value to him." He sent and received in reply this: "Don't be such a fool as to send your money to us again, but keep it in your pocket."

MOTHER AND SON.

"May I see my boy, sir?" She was thin and wan, her clothes were poor, but neat, and the trouble in her eyes showed that her heart was very heavy.

"You can," said the officer kindly.

She went into the corridor and sat where the shadow covered her face. The tired head went against the wall, and the eyes were closed. But between the lashes a drop or two forced their way, as if a misery was there that could break the bonds of pride or the courage of patient suffering.

The turnkey brought him in, and for a moment he stood before her without speaking. He was tall and fair, with blue eyes, and in age was full sixteen years. At first there was a defiant look in his eyes, but when he saw that picture of wounded love and loving suffering before him, his lip quivered, and it required all his strength to hold himself in control.

"Mother!"

The word was spoken low, and as she heard it she started as though called back from a dream that was full of rest and comfort. She looked up, and in a moment more arms were about his neck, and his head lay on that heart which had beat so true for him through years of his wayward folly.

Three years before he had left her, and in all that time she had not seen him; and now, after fifty miles of hurried travel, she met him in the hands of the law—a thief on his own confession.

The few spectators went out and left them there alone, she with her sorrow, and he, it is hoped, with a repentance that will bear fruit of joy and comfort to her in the years to come.

STRUGGLING AGAINST DEATH.

Recently, Mrs. Amie Oakley, of New York, after a family difficulty, took an ounce of laudanum. It was some time before the fact was known by her relatives, and then the trivial cause of the attempted suicide was dropped, and all bent themselves to save her life. Dr. Kent was sent for. When a person has taken laudanum, of course the great desire is to go to sleep. If the patient can be kept awake till the effects of the narcotic pass away, there is no further danger. But sleep is the sleep of death. In vain the woman begged, implored, prayed, entreated them to let her lie down in rest; but they kept her awake with forced walking, shaking, switching her with twigs, and other light punishment, and at the same time gave the proper antidotes, chiefly the active principle of belladonna, to counteract the effect of the narcotic. In spite of all this she continued to sink, until at eleven o'clock her pulse had run down to four or five beats a minute, and it seemed impossible to keep her from the fatal sleep. Doctor Kent sent for Drs. Meyers and Hurd, to come, and bring their galvanic batteries, which they did, and all three doctors commenced at the woman, keeping her system stimulated and preventing her from going to sleep by strong continuous circuits of galvanism that would have made a normal person almost crazy. The minute a battery was removed the woman appeared to sink, so they kept them going at full strength, one being loaded up with fresh chemicals while the other was being used, and this was kept up unremittently until about three o'clock the next morning, when the effects of the drugs began to wear off, and the pulse showed signs of strengthening. By four o'clock she had entirely recovered and was out of further danger, so that the exhausted doctors could take their leave and seek rest for themselves. They never more euphatically and literally kept a person from dying in their lives. It was a literal tussel with death for eight or nine hours, but with a final victory for the M. D.'s. and their little electric machines.

BREVITY.

None valued this important quality in man or woman more highly than Doctor Abernethy. A woman having burnt her hand called at his house. Showing him her hand she said, "A burn: 'A poultice," quietly returned the learned doctor. The next day the woman returned and said, "Better." "Continue the poultice." In a week she made her last call, and her speech was lengthened to three monosyllables—"Well; your fee?" "Nothing," answered the pleased physician; "you are the most sensible woman I ever saw."

The Paris Rothschilds, who are all bankers, are said to work as hard as if they were just beginning their fortune. They observe their office hours as punctually as the poorest clerk. There is a popular belief that they hope to execute the dream of re-building the temple of Jerusalem.—N. Y. Tribune.

Gleanings.

A grass widow forty-five years old, is attending school in Lumpkin.

George Eliot is said to have made \$40,000 by Daniel Deronda.

A Milwaukee girl's ear will wear out four pairs of brass ear-rings in a year.

Since his marriage, King Alfonso has steadily refused to attend bull fights.

M. De Lesseps is seventy years of age, and the father of thriving twins.

Sir Peter Coats, the spool thread man, is threading his way through the South.

Mrs. A. T. Stewart owns the largest single diamond in the land, value \$35,000.

Did you ever see a woman playing whist when she didn't hold "the worst hand I ever did see?"

Josh Billings says: "The worst tyrant in this world is a woman who is superior to her husband and lets everybody know it."

A Maine man, aged 83, offered a young lady sixty years his junior \$10,000 cash down to marry him. She took the money and the man.

A woman will face a frowning world and cling to the man she loves, through the most bitter adversities, but then she does not believe in wearing a hat that is not exactly the "style."

A handsomely-dressed woman at a recent performance of "Hamlet" given by Edwin Booth, in the Brooklyn Academy, turned to her companion in the midst of the first act, and asked audibly, "Which is 'Shakespeare'?"

A petition containing 60,000 signatures has been transmitted to Parliament from Ireland, asking that the liquor saloons be closed on Sunday in that country, showing that public opinion is right, on the temperance question.

By the laws of Florida no man who has lost an arm or a leg, no matter how or where, or from what cause, can be taxed for any business he may enter into, always excepting the liquor business.

A passionate temper renders a man unfit for advice, deprives him of his reason, robs him of all that is great and noble in his nature, makes him unfit for conversation, destroys friendship, changes justice into cruelty, and turns all order into confusion.

Mrs. Thompson, the lady who created such comment recently in England, by having her horse shod with gold, and who scattered gold coins among the children at Barcelona, Spain, has been placed in a Lunatic Asylum.

A woman that was determined to please herself in marrying, was warned that her intended, although a good kind of a fellow, was rather singular. "Well, then," she replied, "if he is very much unlike other men, he is much more likely to make a good husband."

Policeman (stopping a hack driver)—"Look here, now; don't you know there's an ordinance requiring every carriage to have a lantern at night?" "Sure, sir, what made have I for a lantern at all, at all? Can you not see for yourself, sir, that me horse is blind?"

A statesman said yesterday to a constituent to whom he was showing Congress, "I assure you that there are but three great intellects in the whole body." "And who are they?" replied the modest great man, "and I forget the names of the other two."—Wash. Capital.

After the election of Mr. Wilberforce for Hull, his sister promised the compliment of a new dress for the wife of every freeman who had voted for her brother. At this she was saluted with the cry, "Miss Wilberforce forever!" but she smilingly observed, "Thank you, gentlemen, but I really cannot agree with you; I do not wish to be Miss Wilberforce forever."

Mrs. Jefferson Davis is described as being at present a very stout, very intelligent and very amiable-looking woman. Her face is round, she has a large and expressive mouth and black hair streaked with gray. She is kind-hearted, and is said by a correspondent of the Times of Chicago to be much liked in Memphis, especially by young people. Mr. Davis is very thin, and looks very old and broken.