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Poetry.

Essay on S's.

Such strange sorts of souls as are on the sphere!
Some social, some silent, some stern and severe.
Some smiling so sweetly, some sober and staid,
Some sly in the sunshine, and some in the shade.
Some stooping, some straight, some slender, some stout.
Some starving in silence, some supping with shout.
Some suffering and sick, some sturdy and strong.
Some sorry and sighing, and some singing song.
Some saucy and scolding, some shiftless, some shrewd,
Some sincere and steadfast, submissive, subdued.
The stylish, the simple, the slow, the sedate,
Speculators and swindlers, and statesman in state.
The sculptor and salesman, the savage the sage,
The saint and the sinner, the speaker on stage,
Segar smokers, swearers, sots, sailors on sea,
The spreader of scandal, smooth slanderer she.
Some seamstresses, some at the spindle and spool,
Soothsayers and stewards, and scholars at school
Sectarians and surgeons, and shepherds of sheep,
Surveyors, shoemakers, and sluggards in sleep.
Some slaves and some soldiers, some scoundrels and scamps,
Some scribblers of stanzas for the sake of the stamps.

—*National Baptist.*

A RIBBON.

It was a simple thing to do so much harm—a strip of rose-pink silk—and certainly harmless in itself. But it caused Launce Lisle the worst heartache of his life. I will tell you about it.

Virginia Payne, of Granby, never flirted. That was a fact patent among her admirers. Handsome she was, witty and charming, beyond comparison; but never had folly enough to think that the warmest smile that ever parted her red lips meant more than would read in an open book. If Virginia would write between the lines she had never done so, though she was one and twenty.

For three months she had been mistress of Granby, a magnificent and family inheritance. The great mansion of pale gray stone, set among lawns and gardens, beautiful beyond compare, was her very own, and her home, and it had been the home and possession of all her line for over 100 years. From father to son, and finally from father to daughter, Granby had come to her. And there she dwelt with her guardian, Mr. Israel, her aunt Content and a good train of servants. The heiress of Granby, being who she was and what she was, was tossed far and near, and naturally would have become a prey to fortune hunters, but for one clause of her father's will. It had been the one prayer of his life, and it was his dying request, carefully worded upon paper, that Virginia, then a child of nine years, should marry Launcelot Lisle. He was his stepson, already a young man of character and weight. But he had never lived at Granby, and when Virginia, at 16, met him, she could not remember to have seen him before.

It was on the day of her father's funeral. Her stepsister had been dead several years, and but for the sister of her own mother, aunt Content, she was quite alone. Launce had almost immediately gone back to London, but he had come to her, shivering in her black robes, under all the excitement, and said gently, that he feared she would be very lonesome—that he wished he could remain at Granby—that he might be of some service to her, etc.; but briefly he was gone, and she had returned to school.

At 18 she was at Granby again, and, with her guardian's approval and personal oversight, saw much company. It was better she should see something of the world before choosing a husband, he said; and so, people argued she was not engaged to Launce Lisle, though Virginia said freely that she was so, unless Mr. Lisle preferred otherwise since her father had wished it. Whatever the truth might be, the fact seemed to make fortune-hunters at least frequent. But one fact as I have said was patent—Miss Payne never flirted. Many argued the proof of her engagement from this: others instinctively read another cause in a certain vestal purity of the girl's countenance when in utter repose.

In the play of conversation it was charmingly vivacious and fascinating. Her crimson lips and soft black eyes, the white temples and radiant color, helped make up a face which, when fully seen, could never be forgotten. Certainly Launce Lisle thought so, coming upon it suddenly, for another brief week of his life, on a hurried business trip to New York.

It was just after Virginia became legally mistress of Granby. She was spending the winter in the city.

'I say, Launce,' said Peyton Lesley, 'you will see your betrothed to-night. She is to be at Madame Hyacinth's'

Launce made no reply, but a very sweet woman whom he dearly loved, he asked:

'Do you know Virginia Payne, Prue?' Mrs. Roberts replied that she did.

'Do you like her?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Roberts with decision, 'I do.'

That was enough. Launce said no more. But at supper Virginia's name was again mentioned. He heard then that she never flirted.

He was conscious of dressing with unusual care for the evening's entertainment. Before he left the house he took from a trunk a photograph sent him by Virginia's father, some 12 years previously. It represented a slight child of eight with soft, dark eyes, and a wealth of dark, curling hair. He had the pale child's image dimly in his mind, confused by the memory of the same at 16—a timid girl, trembling in her black dress—when, an hour later, he came face to face with Virginia, in her flush of youthful loveliness.

Mr. Israel upon whose arm she leaned, welcomed him warmly.

'We are going back to Granby to-morrow. Come soon and visit us,' he said.

Launce did not know what words he used in accepting this invitation—the polite figure in white and gold confused him so; but he had arrived late, and Virginia and guardian were already going, and that was the end of the conversation. He mused over it, thinking that the lady was simply polite, and seemed indifferent simply because she was not so. At sight of the frank, steel-blue eyes, the firm, white brows shadowed by rings of fair hair, the finely chisled mouth—all of which she remembered perfectly, her heart gave a traitorous leap and threatened so alarmingly to go over to the stranger that she swiftly summoned all her native caution. He did not love her, probably; perhaps never would; and she was very proud. Even her father's wish must be set aside before her rights as a woman to be preferred solely for herself.

But Launce went to Granby. I hardly know of anything on earth that would have kept him from going. Virginia had reigned mistress there only since the previous autumn, but her taste for what was artistic and beautiful had given the interior of the great mansion a striking charm. Lovely pictures leaned from the walls; graceful figures in bronze and marble graced shelves and niches; floors had been relaid in polished wood, and covered with rich skins and foreign rugs. And over this beautiful home reigned a presence the most beautiful he had ever seen. Launce thought. He talked, and rode, and drove with Virginia, and she was sweet and gentle. But others talked, and rode, and drove with her, sons and brothers of her neighbors whom she had known all her life, and she was sweet and gentle with them. There was Allan Stuart, Godfrey Grey and the Rane brothers—Launce could not see a bit of difference between her treatment of them and of himself. He pondered the matter at night, on a sleepless pillow, the moon looking at him through the silken curtains of the windows that week at Granby. But Launce was a thoroughly manly fellow, and had courage to dare his fate. He did not admire Virginia Payne one whit the less because of the reserve which so baffled him.

One day when they were out riding with a party of four others, he proposed making a cross cut through the woods to find a whip which he had lost there the day previous, and asked Virginia to accompany him.

'We will meet the others at the turnpike crossing,' he said.

Virginia turned her horse's head readily, all unsuspicious; but, when they were hid among the balsamic firs she suddenly became aware of her companion's manner. A sudden bloom showed in her cheeks; she began herself the search for the whip.

'I don't care a picayune for the whip. I came this way, Virginia, that I might be alone with you for a moment.'

This did not tend to make the soft cheeks any less vivid, but Launce did not notice.

'I want to tell you something,' he went on, steadily, 'which you have heard from other men, I dare say, but it is nevertheless true from me. I have never in my life seen a woman who suits me as you do, Virginia; and it is not because of what your father wished and planned for us, but because of yourself. But while you are beautiful and attractive, there is nothing wonderful about me; and though I don't know why you should marry me though I wish you would. Not because of your father's wish either.'

He had taken her hand, stopped the horses, and was looking into her face, with its downcast eyes and tremulous lips.

'Could you love me, Virginia?'

A dimple stirred the soft cheek.

'Perhaps.'

She never knew what startled her horse at that moment, but he shied at some object in the wood, nearly unseating her, and then flew like the wind down the path. Launce followed anxiously, but she had met the others of the party before he overtook her. There was no chance to see her alone again that day, and the next he had set for his departure. But she had confessed nothing, promised nothing, and he was, perhaps, less at ease than before his declaration.

There was company to entertain that day—among the number Tom Arlington. Launce had often heard him spoken of and did not wonder. He was a singularly handsome man, with a brilliant complexion, dishevelled hair, curling beard, a blase air, and the *tout ensemble* of an artist. Launce looked critically at the rose-and-gold of Tom Arlington's make-up, and did not like him. This before he observed that his attentions to Virginia during the evening were very marked. She talked to him, played for him, sang with him. Poor Virginia! So near to being perfectly happy that she dared not contemplate it, she seized upon the first pretext for concealing her emotion. And that pretext, unfortunately was Tom Arlington.

'Alas! how easy the world goes wrong!
A kiss too much or a sigh too long,
And there follows a mist and a blinding rain,
And life is never the same again.'

Launce remembered that Virginia 'did not flirt,' and though he struggled manfully against it, his heart sank like lead before the evening was through. So young, so sensitive, so susceptible to beauty and grace in others, was it possible he would win her? No, no! he told himself, bitterly. He knew how, alone and unaided, he had battled with the stern realities of life, how he had conquered the temptations of early youth, and worked, out of the hardest and most adverse circumstances, a pure and noble life; but what did that go for with this charming and petted girl, who had ever laid among the roses and fed on the lilies of life? She was likely—aye, far more likely—to be pleased with the artist, Tom Arlington!

He rose early from the night's troubled sleep, and went down into the garden of Granby. The great golden day lilies were in bloom, and the trees veiled with young green. Suddenly, on a rustic seat upon the terrace, he saw Tom Arlington. He was directly in his path; he could not avoid him without turning directly back, and so he walked on and saw what Tom had in his hand—a ribbon of pink silk, with a rose worked in silver thread upon one end. Now it chanced that Launce knew the ribbon very well. He had marked it knotted among the lace at Virginia's throat, and at sight of it his heart seemed suddenly to stop beating in his bosom. Desperation made him quick-witted and unsparing of himself.

'You have found a ribbon of Miss Payne's?' he asserted, with fine carelessness.

'No,' said Tom, laying it gently between the leaves of a book upon his knee. 'She gave it to me.'

Launce recollected again that Virginia 'never flirted.' He made no further effort to see her alone, but the next day departed from Granby.

Virginia never guessed all this, but before Launce's very wretched summer had passed she began to wonder that she did not hear from or see him again. He had gone back to England, but she knew that he was to return to America in September at least. She could not but think it natural that he should write to her all this time. But Launce was far from dreaming of such a thing. He was trying with all his might to forget her; he succeeded so ill, that at last he determined to visit Granby once more, and behold her betrothed, if not married, to Tom Arlington. He left his horse at the gate with a servant, and came quietly on foot up the avenue. The red leaves of the maples covering the ground made his steps soundless. Suddenly, among the trees, he saw a gray dress, and a man's elegant lounging figure. The latter leaned with a downcast and sullen face, against the trunk of a tree, his contenance and attitude in strong contrast to his costly dress and air of a pleasure-seeker. The man was Tom Arlington, and the lady Virginia in the act of turning toward the house.

'No,' she said, clearly, 'you cannot accompany me any further. I have taken advantage of this meeting to ask you to be relieved henceforth of your company, Mr. Arlington. In displaying the ribbon I simply and unsuspiciously gave you as a book-mark—displaying it as a token from me—you have acted a falsehood which will never profit you.'

He muttered something.

'Forgive you? No! But I will certainly do my best to forget you,' she answered, and hurried away.

There were tears upon his cheek when Launce overtook her, but her blush of delight burned them away, and she gave him her hand.

'Virginia,' he said, 'I am here to repeat what I told you once. Will you say "perhaps" again?'

'No,' she answered, with a deeper dimple and brighter flush; 'Now I will say, "certain."'

The Wonders of Mimicry.

A very striking illustration of the possibility of mimicry without drollery was afforded once by the famous Coulon, who may be described as at once the fool and physician at the court of one of the Louis. He actually mimicked the deceased Minister Villele with such accuracy as to afford the means of painting what has been declared to be a wonderfully faithful portrait. It appeared that after the death of the minister his friends were grieved to find that there was no satisfactory portrait of him in existence. Coulon was present when expression was given to their regret at the circumstance, and agreed with them that no likeness of the deceased statesman represented him as he said, the profound subtlety of his character and his evanescent expression. As he spoke he assumed the features, expression, attitude, and tone of voice of the departed man with the most startling accuracy, and was at once requested to sit for a portrait. As to the features, something we suppose must be accredited to the imagination of beholders. The artist probably was satisfied to catch the expression from the mimic's face and to rely on his memory or inferior portraits for the delineation of features, unless the two men bore a resemblance to each other to a degree which would have robbed the performance of much of its merit.

One of the most remarkable facts about the most skillful of mimics is that they are able to overcome the apparently insuperable difficulty presented by the endless and radical variety of feature, and will give to a face an aspect and expression which have been characteristic of some visage totally different in every particular. There can be no doubt also that this is the real secret of much of the power of amusing possessed by the mimic. The vagaries of expression, voice, tone, attitude, and utterance present a constant series of striking incongruities. That which in one person requires a very keen observation to catch, and is not particularly striking when it is caught, is no sooner donned by some totally dissimilar person than it becomes ludicrously incongruous, and is found to be irresistibly amusing. There was nothing, so far as we are aware, specially clever in the Chantry, the sculptor, yet Sir Edwin Landseer once put a dinner party in a roar of laughter by cleverly personating him. The sculptor put Landseer in his chair at the head of the table, and went himself and stood before the fire. 'Come young man,' said Landseer, imitating to a nicety the tone and manner of the individual whose chair he occupied, 'you think yourself ornamental; now make yourself useful and ring the bell.' Landseer was one of the cleverest mimics that ever lived. His simulations were described as perfect in every particular, displaying the nicest discrimination in points of character, and the most astonishing accuracy. The bewilderment of the butler who, on the occasion just referred to, came into the room and saw his master standing at the fireplace, while he heard his master's voice at the table ordering more wine, was very amusing.

What Young Men Have Done.

Before he was thirty the great Napoleon had conducted one of the most brilliant campaigns the world ever saw. Casaubon, the famous scholar of the sixteenth century, was appointed professor of Greek at twenty-two, and Heinsus, of Leyden, at eighteen. At the age of twenty-eight, Linnæus, the botanist, wrote his great work.

At twenty-six, Cuvier was appointed professor at Paris. Kent, the commentator on the American law, was lecturer in Columbia college at thirty-one. Professor Dana, of Yale college, published his book on mineralogy at twenty-five, only four years after graduation.

Edward Everett, at twenty, was ordained pastor of a church in Boston, and within two years attained distinguished fame as an orator; at twenty one he was appointed professor of Greek at Harvard.

The late Benjamin Peirce, one of the profoundest mathematicians of America, was chosen professor of mathematics at Cambridge at the age of twenty-four.

Three of the well-known poets of the century—Byron, Shelley and Keats—died before the age of forty; Byron at thirty-six, Shelley as he was completing his thirtieth year, Keats at twenty-five.

'Thanatopsis,' the most widely known of all the poems of William Cullen Bryant, was written in his nineteenth year.

—*Golden Days.*

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