

THE ALAMANCE GLEANER.

VOL. XVI

GRAHAM, N. C., THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1892.

NO. 47.

1892



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A HAPPY, PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO OUR MANY KIND PATRONS AND MANY THANKS FOR PAST FAVORS.

In beginning the new year we beg to inform the people that we shall continue business in Graham, and shall as in the past do our utmost to merit a continuance of past patronage. Our stock shall be kept up at all times and our prices shall be as low if not lower than elsewhere. We shall begin the new year by offering

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MAMMY'S STORY.

Ah, ev'ry one dar was two little boys, James and Johnny Wood. I see 'em in the wind withou', and the spickin' of the rain. And the broad shadows tappin' at the dripping window pane. When I was a baby, rocking slow, with the baby on her knee. Told many a wondrous story—"Jus' as true as true could be!"

"Well, one dar was two little boys, James and Johnny Wood. An' James was bad as bad could be—an' Johnny was a good boy. Dear ma, she had a bag o' gold hid in de eubby hole. An' James he found it out, an' all dat heap o' money stole!

An' des he run away, so far he had a rubber shoe. An' let his ma an' her so poor, dey dunno what to do!"

"Well, Johnny, for his poor mamma, he wuck'd de shoe. Tel onks she sent him to de swamp to chop some cane. An' dar a lot o' wators come—er free, er to, er free. An' de biggest gobbled Johnny up, an' swallowed him alive!"

"An' de little boy, he run away, an' his mudder's leg o' gold!"

"Tel he chop a monstrous hole right through the mudder's leg!"

"De mudder's mudder stop to de reach his mudder's door. An' he poured de shinin' money dar, right on de parter floor!"

"Now, honey! remember dis from de sale you jus' been cot— De bad, dey allus comes to bad—an' de good, dey gits on good!"

—From "Archer's Wives in St. Nicholas."

AN ANGEL UNAWARES.

"Mother, must I do it?" The sweet voice that spoke these words was very pathetic, and the lovely child face was clouded with an expression of fear. Her listener sighed sorrowfully.

"My darling, you know why I ask you to do it."

The little girl cast an expressive glance at a closed door adjoining the shabby furnished room in which this conversation took place, and said with evident effort:

"Yes, I know why, and I will try to be good and not to mind so much for father's sake."

Perhaps a few of the playgoers who frequented the pretty little "Sothorn" theatre missed the handsome jeune premier, who for a few weeks had been there in a popular comedy, but probably they would have been little affected by the news that owing to an accident, he was now unable to act by the irony of fate, just when, after years of patient work in the provinces, he seemed likely to obtain the share of recognition and success his undoubted talent deserved.

Jack Hesselstine had always had an irrepressible love for the stage. He was a gentleman by birth and education, and when his spendthrift father died, leaving him alone in the world with very slender means, it was natural enough that he should follow his own bent. It must be owned that he was imprudent, for he married very young, and married a girl that had lost her heart to him at a country theater, and who was discovered by her family in consequence. She had neither talent nor inclination for her husband's vocation, which was fortunate, as he had no desire for his wife

to act, but she was a charming woman, able to make their poor home a happy one, and he never gave her cause to regret the union for which she had sacrificed so much.

Their only child Sybil was now 6 years old, and of a beauty so rare and delicate as to cause the sternest landladies to melt and the most obstinate creditors to soften when they saw her. She was literally the idol of both parents, and when the first welcome gleams of success came, their first thought was that they would be able to give their one treasure a good education and a permanent home. For a few months things had looked very bright, and then, just at the end of the season, Jack had a fall and dislocated his knee. It proved to be a long, troublesome business, and it was, of course, impossible for him to get an engagement. As bad luck would have it, the "Sothorn" was changing hands, and the manager, to whom he owed much kindness, had gone to America. It had been a hot summer, but the Hesselstines had been obliged to give up their pretty little house in St. John's Wood, and to go into inexpensive lodgings. They would have been better off in the country, but Jack was so sanguine of speedy recovery, and so fearful of having to return to the old drudgery if he once left London, that he insisted upon remaining there. Nothing seemed to hurt Sybil, who for all her fairness was very healthy. She made friends everywhere, and attracted a good deal of kindly attention.

One day, as Mrs. Hesselstine sat sewing and thinking sadly of unpaid bills and a cloudy future, she was interrupted by the entrance of an audacious servant, who announced with manifest awe: "Miss Desanges and Mr. Melton." Everybody knows beautiful Viola Desanges, with her stormy life history and her brilliant artistic gifts. Amy Hesselstine had often admired her upon the stage, and rose to receive her magnificently arrayed visitor, a little conscious of her own poor dress and of the shabby room.

Miss Desanges saw in a moment that she had to deal with a lady, and said with her own special winning gracefulness of manner: "I hope you will forgive what seems like an intrusion when I explain its cause. But before I do this, may I introduce to you Mr. Melton, the author of 'Passion Flowers,' the forthcoming new play at the 'Parthenon.' It was to have been brought out in three weeks, but a very serious obstacle has occurred, likely to delay its production. A most important part was to have been taken by a small niece of mine, who is well known for her cleverness, but unfortunately she has caught scarlet fever. I was really in despair until quite by chance I saw your lovely little Sybil, and felt immediately that here was my very ideal. I saw Mr. Hesselstine in 'Fate,' and feel sure that his daughter is sure to have talent. If she proves as satisfactory as I imagine, I would gladly pay her well, for I am my own manager present."

Amy turned pale. "Neither my husband nor I ever intended Sybil for the stage, Miss Desanges. I am not an actress, but I know quite enough of the life behind the scenes to wish to keep my little girl away from the footlights. If you can spare a few minutes I will go to my husband, but I am almost sure that his opinion will coincide with my own strong feeling in the matter. I hope he will be able to come in and see you himself."

While they sat waiting the young author, who had thin, marked features and melancholy eyes, took up a framed photograph from the table. Viola Desanges leant over his chair and looked at it intently, with a soft expression stealing over her beautiful, weary face. "It is like a dream to me to think that my play will soon be brought out with you as its heroine," said Horace Melton, after a pause. "Like all poets, I have my queer fancies, and I cannot help thinking that such a child as this must bring good fortune with her. She is like one of the visions of the old masters of the angels watching round the Holy Child."

Miss Desanges sighed. There was something odd and unwelcome about this young man. He had a strange way of speaking his thoughts aloud that fascinated her by its simplicity. She felt that he at least believed her to be a good woman, and his faith in her was more precious than the best of adores, to all of whom she was equally cold. But deep in her heart there was one overmastering love burning like a fierce flame, and she felt that, bound in honor as she was to a man whom she had learned to despise, if he who had inspired this strong passion pleaded he would not plead in vain. All these thoughts flitted through her brain as she sat there. Simple and poor, as were all her surroundings, she knew intuitively that she was in a happy home, contrasting Amy Hesselstine's lot curiously with her own splendid misery.

Melton sat in the next room. Amy was hurriedly explaining to her husband what had happened. At first his negative was as emphatic as her own, but she could see that his fatherly pride was much gratified by the visit of the great actress. "If you will give me my crutches I will go in and see Miss Desanges myself," and in spite of his crutches Jack looked so handsome when he made his appearance that he inspired both visitors with very sincere pity. Miss Desanges plunged into business at once, exercising all her powers of persuasion, until at last the parents yielded.

It was not any love of art that made them consent, poor things. Even Jack had no wish to see Sybil on the stage, but there was the haunting consciousness of debts that were too honest not to desire to pay, and the fear of still more grinding poverty in the near future. Miss Desanges was simply delighted when she had gained her point; she was so rich that she could well afford to be generous, but the terms she offered were far higher than she had at first intended.

"Perhaps Mr. Hesselstine, you would kindly bring her down to meet at the theatre to-morrow, at about 12 o'clock, just to try her. I am not afraid. Good-by, Mr. Hesselstine; get well and we must see if we cannot find you a place in our company. They say Mr. Vanfield is to be married to an heiress soon, and if this is true he will retire and leave a vacancy. You have done me a real service, and I shall not soon forget it."

It took Mrs. Hesselstine a long while to explain all this to Sybil, although she was the only child; she was older than her years. Sybil was quite familiar with theatre and had often seen her father act, but she had her own quaint ideas upon the subject, and sometimes talked about the cruel people who clapped and laughed at acts when he was well, and forgot to be kind when he was ill and suffering.

She adored her father, and when she once grasped the idea that if she were a good girl and did what she was told she would have money enough to buy him all sorts of nice things, she consented to try. Her little heart almost failed her when she was taken to the theatre, but she was quick and clever, and learned the few words of her part so rapidly that Miss Desanges was more than satisfied.

It gave Amy Hesselstine a thrill to hear the clear little voice as she stood half hidden in the wings. She let her veil fall over her face, as she silently prayed for her darling—prayers that she might be kept pure and spotless and learn no evil in this strange, new atmosphere. Neither Sybil nor her mother ever guessed how strange an influence was exercised by the new child member of the company. Men and women alike felt better for her innocent presence; the very scene shifted, and Viola Desanges, who had never known the magic touch of baby fingers, acted the scene with Sybil as she had never acted before.

It was pathetic enough in all truth. A beautiful, imaginative woman, with a silent reserved husband the fanciest indifferent, has in a weak moment consented to leave her home with a rich artist. His specious arguments convince her, and at last at a ball at her own house she gives her promise. She goes upstairs to put on a cloak and then cannot resist going to the room where her child is lying asleep. All is dark save for the lamp held in the hand of the mother, who kneels by the cot weeping passionately and half regretting her rash impulse. The child sleeps calmly, as she pours out a pitiful prayer for forgiveness, but wakes when the hot tears fall upon her cheeks.

"Why are you crying so, darling mamma? And are you going away with that man you love so dearly?"

"Hush, baby, it is still night, but I have got to go away on a long journey."

Nothing prettier than Sybil was surely ever seen on any stage when she sat up in her crib with her golden curls all ruffled.

"Mamma, darling mamma, don't go away and leave papa and me. Oh! take us with you; we cannot be left alone, we love you so dearly."

As she said this she clung round the neck of the mother who was going to forsake her, and the victory was won. The curtain fell as Viola Desanges threw off her heavy traveling cloak, and sat down holding the tiny hand in her own.

"Go to sleep, my baby; I will stay and take care of you always."

Then the husband, who has been an unseen witness, comes forward with his full forgiveness, and all ends happily.

Wisecracks expressed doubts as to the success of "Passion Flowers." It was too simple, too poetical, too sentimental; in fact, there was no end to the charges brought against it, and Horace Melton sometimes desponded. Not so Miss Desanges.

"I tell you I am sure of the verdict," she said to him again and again. "I have never had a part like as well. As to Sybil, she is unique; that other simplicity and that face must take the audience by storm. I know audiences so well."

It was a grey, chilly October evening, and a tall, distinguished looking man was sitting alone in a luxurious room in Tremontly writing rapidly. He was tall and athletic, and his

hand trembled as he wrote. Hugh Errington was rich, free and gifted, yet he was most unhappy. The only son of good parents, he had been a good man in spite of all temptations. But then he had never known the real force of temptation until he discovered that the passion against which he had silently battled for years was returned. He could scarcely remember the time when he had not loved Viola Desanges, but he was a man of honor, and he knew that she was married. Later she had been more miserable than usual, and then one memorable night each had guessed the secret of the other, and the knowledge had brought a bitter sweet rapture that was more like pain than gladness. Viola was the stronger now, since a little golden haired teacher had taught her sweet lessons of patience and forgiveness. She was learning to be brave in her resignation. But Hugh Errington had grown harder and more reckless since he knew the truth, and now, on the first night of "Passion Flowers"—ominous name—he was forgetting honor, forgetting pride, and forsaking the right path. In his hand he now held the sealed letter that implored Viola Desanges to leave London, to leave the world with him. A bouquet lay beside him, and he carefully fastened the note among the roses which concealed it. Half an hour later he was with two or three other men in a small high box at the Parthenon. It all seemed like a confused, idle dream. He bowed and smiled to his acquaintances, and talked abstractedly to those who were with him. This time to-morrow his place would be vacant, his story the talk of the town, and honest men would have no part or lot with him. The play proceeded, and as Viola Desanges had foreseen, it was received with growing favor. The critics agreed that she had surpassed herself, and even Hugh Errington was conscious of an inexplicable change in her.

Little Sybil's entrance roused him from a reverie, and he followed her every movement with fixed attention. She brought back to his remembrance a picture that had hung over his bed in the old hall when he was a boy, the picture of a child angel with a white lily in his hand. He remembered how he liked to fancy it a guardian spirit when he fell asleep at night. What had such thoughts as these to do with the present? He had chosen; it was too late. No, not yet too late. The flowers lay beside him; Viola was on the stage; they were still apart; the barrier was not broken, as it should be broken before another day dawned. He did not follow the action of the play very closely, but its construction was simple. Was it merely a coincidence that it seemed to have been written especially for him? "You say you will give me everything heart can desire, but, Godfrey, if I go away with you, you can never give me back a woman's greatest treasure, my good name." With what thrilling expression Viola Desanges spoke these words, and what a depth of meaning lay in her great wistful eyes!

There was not a sound in the theatre. The great actress had arisen, and the audience was stretched. And the child! When the flushed face on the pillow was revealed by the lamp there was a creature in the eyes of many, but little used to feel emotions such as these, and real tears fell on Hugh's cheeks as Viola Desanges leant over

her, forgetting the artist in the woman. And Hugh Errington! Surely the guardian spirit of his boyish dreams stood before him in the guise of little Sybil. Silently, earnestly, the great battle between good and evil was being waged. His friends had left him, and he had no witness when he took the bouquet and tore to fragments the note that had lain like a serpent among the blossoms.

He would leave England, but he would leave it alone. He would not tempt a loving woman to sin for his sake; he would begin a new life that should be higher and purer than the old. The curtain fell amid frantic applause. The actors were coming, and for a moment Viola Desanges stood before them with Sybil beside her. The smile of triumph upon her face made it more beautiful than ever, but to the man who watched her for the last time it had an added sweetness, as he looked at her and flung the bouquet of roses at the feet of the child who had saved him and come to them both like an angel savior.—Roland Grey in the Stage.

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