

Hillsborough Recorder

UNION, THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS—THE GUARDIANS OF OUR LIBERTIES.

Vol. XLVII.

HILLSBOROUGH, N. C., WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1867.

No. 2409.

APRIL FOOL'S DAY.

"Well, I don't think any body can ever deceive me again, on that day. Once in a lifetime is enough for any sensible person to be tricked, on the first of April." And pretty Mabel Hughes looked defiance of all jokes, tossing back her sunny curls with a little white hand, and flashing a merry, saucy look at the company around her.

There was quite a group of young folks, assembled to dance the old year out, and the new year in. Mabel Hughes took precedence at most of the village gatherings, by right of acknowledged belle ship, and her father's large hospitable house was the rendezvous on the present occasion. The young folks had been discussing anniversaries, and while on that theme, April Fool's day had had a place in the list of memorable days of the year. Mabel had been fooled the year before by a gift of an exquisite basket containing apparently clusters of rich red strawberries, far in advance of the New England season. With a little cry of pleasure she had put one of luscious looking berries into her mouth, to find it a painted deception. Laughing, yet thoroughly in earnest, she had vowed never again to believe in a gift or speech of the date again.

As she now made her speech she looked full in the face of the supposed perpetrator of the last year's jokes, and was answered by a pair of sunny frank eyes, that looked fully equal to fun of any sort.

"I can deceive you again," he declared, in answer to her implied challenge. "You have no idea how pretty you looked when you curled up your nose and puckered your lips over that berry."

"Why, where were you?"

"In the hall, enjoying the joke."

"Well, make the most of the recollection, for you will never see me in a like scrape again."

"Until next April."

"Never!"

"We'll see! I shall take the next three months to invent something absolutely impenetrable."

"I defy you!"

"Hark!"

Slowly the peal of bells from the neighboring church, sounded the midnight hour. As the first stroke fell upon the air, the group rose to their feet, joined hands in a ring, and so stood motionless till the last echo died away. Then "Happy New Year," burst simultaneously from their lips, and after joyous greetings all round, the party separated, and the house was soon wrapped in darkness and repose.

"So John Martyn will play me another trick this year," thought Mabel, the next morning, as she stood before her glass twisting the bright curls round her fingers. "He may try his best, but he will not catch me again. Heigh ho! he will have other things to think of by that time, and perhaps will forget me altogether."

For John Martyn was going into the world to seek his fortune. One year ago he had left college, having spent his whole patrimony to obtain an education. He had left home a frank bright boy, with unformed manners, rough ways, a country bred youth in all senses. He had come home frank and sunny as ever, but with the quiet courtesy of a gentleman, and an education won by intense application during the entire college course. One year he had given to home, though alone in his little cottage a brotherless, sisterless orphan. He had not intended to stay so long, but there was a magnetism in Mabel Hughes' dark eyes that bound him to the village, until the admiration deepened into sincere, earnest love, and then the conviction grew that he must win wealth before he dared tell his passion.

Mr. Hughes was wealthy, a lawyer in good practice, but there were nine children in the luxurious home, and the estate would give but moderate competency to each one.

John Martyn was not the man to woo Mabel from her home, unless he could offer at least comfort in his own, and he had drained his purse in the year following his return from college. Somewhere in Texas

he had an uncle, who had written to him that he had an opening for an enterprising young man, as stock farmer.

"I am very old," so the letter ran, "and very poor, so you must not come out here with any idea of finding wealth made to your hand. You will have to work hard—very hard, but if you are not afraid of that, I will give you a start, some practical advice drawn from experience, and a shake down in my ranche."

So he had written, and his nephew gladly accepted his invitation. He had remained to see the New Year in, but Mabel knew his call on that day would be to say farewell for months, years, perhaps—perhaps, she thought, sadly, "never to meet again." She had never questioned her heart about John Martyn, content to take his pleasant attentions, his gallant speeches, his deferential words, or, in other words, his half saucy jokes, his laughing badinage for the amusement of the hour. But on that New Year's day she was restless, nervous, and excited, finding herself talking at random to her callers, saying yes where she should have said no, and listening intently for a foot-fall and voice that lingered away from her. At last he came, timing his call to miss the morning visitors, and when the luncheon bell cleared the room of the family. Declining Mrs. Hughes' invitation to join them at table, he kept Mabel for a few parting words. He did not bid her, he did not ask a return of his love; he only told her his prospects and hopes, and then said if he ever had a home to offer a bride, he should come to his native village to seek one. Very vague this, but Mabel, looking into his dark, earnest eyes, silently resolved that his bride should be waiting for him when he returned. Night found him speeding over the iron road to New York, on the long journey to Texas.

My little heroine spoke no word to any one of the hope in her heart. Some day, she thought, her secret fount of hope and happiness might be open to her friends, but not now—not until words were given that made her blissful dream a certainty of joy. Three months—four—sped away, and one April morning, when the feet of May were pressing closely on the confines of the passing month, Mabel had a letter all alone in her pretty room; she read the words, her heart full of joyful surprise over the contents.

John Martyn wrote a strange story. Upon his arrival in Texas he had found his uncle fast sinking under a fatal disease, partly the effect of starvation and exposure. In a miserable hut, with no bed but a blanket spread upon the mud floor, half clothed and half famished, the prematurely old man lay dying. Shocked at such a sight, John had at once sent for a physician and some comforts to the nearest station, but the old man was so distressed at the expense, that it was not until his nephew assured him his own purse still held the needful funds, that he consented to have a bed, a chair, a stove, and some medicines. For weeks he lingered, the young man faithfully ministering to his wants, then died, leaving all he possessed, by will, to his beloved nephew, John Martyn. The miserable hut seemed a poor legacy, but the young man's amazement may be imagined when he found his uncle had left an enormous fortune scraped together in a lifetime of miserly accumulation and avaricious hoarding. After this tale, he poured out his whole heart to Mabel, telling of his love, his hopes, and plans. One word from her would bring him at once to her side. His uncle's affairs would keep him a few weeks in Texas, but before letters could be exchanged he would be free to hasten to her. Might he hope? If she did not love him, silence would deal that blow to his heart.

I cannot tell the rush of happiness that flooded Mabel's heart as she read the letter. She had pictured years of anxious waiting, had let her fancy even run upon death during separation, had thought at best they would be middle aged folks before John made his fortune, and had tried to think how emigration to Texas would suit her little self; and now he could come home,

rich, free, loving, to make her his bride. Out of her full, loving heart, she wrote him a frank letter, then, before taking both to gain her parents' consent to her answer, turned to the date, to be certain of her address. With a quick, passionate cry, she threw the letter far from her, and sprang from her seat. All the joy was gone from her smiling lips, the flush from her cheek. Pale, with a concentrated anger blazing in her eyes, she paced the floor, clenching her little hands, and muttering, in hasty, choking accents:

"Unmanly! Ungentlemanly! April Fool's Day! This is the result of his three months' meditation. Idiot I was to be so tricked by that romantic story. I might have seen it was copied from some old novel. Uncle dying in a hut and leaving him a millionaire! And to try to win from me this," and she tore the letter into shreds as she spoke. "If I had sent it, before looking at that date—But he shall see that his base, ungenerous trick failed to deceive me."

Then hot tears poured down her cheeks, for remember she loved him. Keener than a knife thrust was the pain of thinking he had trifled with the love she had made the hope of her life. No true knight this, to make a jest of the holiest, purest impulses of her heart. She began to think she had been unaimedly, and let him see too plainly the affection she bore him; and the weary day wore away, leaving her pale and sick with conflicting emotion and pain. A headache will answer for pale cheeks and red eyes for one day; but as weeks wore on, and Mabel became more languid and wretched each day, her mother's tears were aroused, and she anxiously sought for some help for her bright, winsome child, now so dull and pallid. A spring and summer of intense heat had added to the depression of Mabel's nature, and, after much consultation, it was decided to send her to New York, for the winter, to visit her father's sister, and see if city gayeties would not restore her roses.

In the meantime John Martyn waited in Texas, watching every mail from the very earliest that could have brought a reply to his letter, not daring to leave lest the detained epistle might be lost, if sent after him. In his strange bewilderment at the unexpected turn in fortune's wheel, the rush of hope that came with Mabel's image to his heart, the anxiety to write at once, to communicate his news, and try his fate; he had never noticed the unfortunate date of his important letter. The foolish challenge of New Year's Eve had been crowded from his memory by the hurrying change of events, and, therefore, the explanation of her silence did not occur to him. No, she did not love him, he had been foolish, blind, vain, to believe that all her gentle winning ways meant more than friendship. Summer heat was warning him from Texas, and, arranging his affairs, he left his uncle's grave, and the miserable hut, and started for a tour of the States, previous to an intended trip to Europe. He would travel and forget this boyish love and folly.

It was Christmas Eve, and Mrs. Greenway was to give a large party, to which all the upper crust of New York society were invited. Mrs. Greenway was to introduce her niece, and when an old friend requested permission to bring his son's college chum, a young millionaire, on a flying visit to New York, and about to start for Europe, Mrs. Greenway graciously gave the requested permission.

So they met. Mabel was listlessly looking over the room full of strange faces, trying to feel the interest her aunt expected in her guests, when John Martyn entered the room.

"Who is that, Aunt Helen? How came he here?" she asked in an eager whisper.

"Where, my dear? Oh, that must be the gentleman Mr. Lee was telling me about. Quite a romantic story," and then she told Mabel what she had believed to be a cruel jest.

One part of the letter true. Was the rest so? The quick blood flashed through her veins with suffocating speed; her breath

came in short gasps, but with nervous self-control she stood quiet. They came forward to greet the hostess, and as John turned from Mrs. Greenway to acknowledge the introduction to her niece, his eyes fell upon Mabel.

She did not pause to think whether it was forward or not. With both hands extended, her eyes lifted imploringly, her whole face quivering with emotion, she said:—

"Oh, John, was it an April joke?"

And then the date of his letter flashed upon his memory. With quick tact he drew her hand through his arm, and led her toward the door.

"Where can we be alone?" he whispered, for she trembled violently, while the color was fading from her face with alarming rapidity.

"In the library. Come."

Well, reader, you and I need not go too far. When, in the early spring, John Martyn sailed for Europe, Mabel was by his side, a fair, sunny bride, and the April day that threatened to crush the happiness of two lives, will do to recall for an old woman's warning when silver threads creep in among her clustering curls.

NOT THE GIFT, BUT THE MOTIVE.—A poor Arab, travelling in the desert, met with a spring of clear, sweet, sparkling water. Accustomed as he was to his brackish wells, to his simple mind, it appeared that such water as this was worthy of a monarch; and filling his leather bottle from the spring, he determined to go and present it to the caliph himself.

The poor man travelled a great distance before he reached his sovereign, and laid his humble offering at his feet. This caliph did not despise the little gift brought to him with so much trouble. He ordered some of the water to be poured into a cup, drank it, and thanking the Arab with a smile, ordered him to be presented with a reward. The courtiers around pressed forward, eager to taste of the wonderful water, but, to the surprise of all, the caliph forbade them to touch a single drop.

After the poor Arab had quitted the royal presence with a light heart, the caliph turned to his courtiers, and thus explained the motives of his conduct: "During the travels of the Arab," said he, "the water in the leather bottle had become impure and distasteful. But it was an offering of love, and as such I have received it with pleasure. But I knew well had I suffered another to partake of it, he would not have concealed his disgust; and therefore I forbade you to touch the draught, lest the heart of the poor man would have been wounded." In such love will our Lord receive our poor gifts.

Paddy, honey, will you buy a watch?"

"And is it about selling your watch ye are Mike?"

"Troth it is darlint."

"What is the price?"

"Ten shillings and a mutchin of the creature."

"Is the watch a decent one?"

"Sure, and I've had it twenty years, and it never once deaved me."

"Well, here's your tin, and now tell me does it go well?"

"Bedad, an' it goes faster than any watch in Connaught, Munster, Ulster or Leinster, not barring Dublin."

"Bad luck to ye, Mike, then you have taken me in. Didn't you say it niver deaved ye?"

"Sure an' I did; nor did it, for I never deaved on it."

The same God who moulded the sun and kindled the stars, watches the flight of the insect. He who balances the clouds and hung the earth upon nothing notices the fall of the sparrow. He who gave Saturn his rings and placed the moon like a ball of silver in the broad arch of heaven, gives the rose leaf its delicate tint, and made the distant sun to nourish the violet. And the same being notices the praise of the cherubim and the prayers of the little children.