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Selected Story.

My Brown Merino.

BY MIDDIE BELL.

"Do you think it will look fit to be seen, after it is turned?" I asked, holding up to the light my old brown merino.

George looked at it rather dubiously, while I anxiously waited her decision.

"I'm--I don't know, Rose. I wish you would take my black alpaca. The merino will be good enough for me here at home."

"Indeed I'll do no such thing!" I exclaimed, indignantly. "Have all the pleasure of going away, and take your dresses in the bargain, leaving you to stay home and wear my old clothes! I can't be quite that selfish, George."

George laughed melodiously. She always had a pleasant, rippling laugh--it sounded warm and sunny, just like her own sweet temper.

"Now that's what I call 'straining at a gnat,'" said George, with her ripe, red lips trying to pout, but quivering with smiles instead. "But never comes mamma. She shall settle the point."

Poor, dear mamma turned her head, first to one impetuous daughter, then to the other, sighing gently all the while. But to my great grief, the decision was in my favor.

"I wish you could have another new dress, dear Rose," said mamma, in her kindest tones; "but I don't see how we can manage it."

All this dispute may seem very trivial to the uninterested, but to us, the interested parties, it was of the greatest importance. I was going on a journey--actually going to leave my home, and travel alone for the first time in my life. We--that is mamma, George and I--lived on granddaddy's farm, in New Hampshire. Mamma had a friend named Mrs. Wharton, who had been living in Boston for many years, and she had written to mamma, begging that one of her daughters might pay her a long visit. Great was the debating as to which should accept the invitation. George insisted that it was my prerogative, as I rather think our new minister had something to do in making George so persistently refuse to go; for good and kind as George was, she had never been quite so active in the Sunday-school and Dorcas, until young Mr. Partridge beamed upon us, with his bright, black eyes. However, it won't do to tell her secrets without special permission.

Mamma had given me a new gray poplin for Sundays and visitings; I had also a white muslin for evenings, in case I should go to "any parties. These, with my two morning-wrappers, were considered a very good outfit. George had generously insisted on my taking her new wash along with my own; and as I said at the beginning of my story, wanted me to have also her new black alpaca, her one best dress, and leave my brown merino--my last winter's garment--for her to wear on Sundays. But George was the soul of generosity, and would beggar herself to do any one a kindness.

After much twisting and turning, and discussions as to trimmings, my wardrobe was considered finished and presentable, and I embarked on my journey. The ride was one long delight, for my passionate love of traveling had hitherto been very little gratified.

As I stood in the depot, at my journey's end, looking helplessly about me, a tall gentleman, with a handsome brown mustache, approached me, and bowing with that easy and polished grace which only long contact with the best society can give, said, in an inquiring tone:

"Miss Rose, I presume?"

I bowed in response, inwardly wondering if polite society required gentlemen to address ladies, on a first acquaintance, by their Christian names.

"My aunt, Mrs. Wharton, has been unexpectedly called away from home for a few hours, and has given me the honor and pleasure of escorting you to her house."

My second reply was another bow. Again I was wondering who this nephew was. The gentleman looked at me rather curiously. Evidently he

was beginning to think me dumb, so I found voice to say:

"How is Mrs. Wharton?"

"Very well, indeed, I thank you, and looking eagerly for your arrival."

After we were seated in the carriage, which was far handsomer than my country experience had thought possible, the gentleman proceeded in his efforts for my entertainment.

"Do you wonder how I knew you, Miss Rose?"

"Very much, I replied--not, however, without qualms of conscience, as I had really not given it a thought."

"I recognized you by your dress," he triumphantly responded.

I looked down at my brown merino, the subject at home of so much disputing, and felt an inward terror. Was the man a medium, a clairvoyant? Had he in spirit heard my conversation with George?

"My dress?" I gasped.

"Yes, your dress. My aunt informed me that your traveling-suit was brown."

"Oh!" I faintly ejaculated, inwardly thinking how very strange in mamma to write to Mrs. Wharton concerning the dress, and feeling considerably vexed about it--so much so that the gentleman, judging from my flushed cheeks that the subject was unpleasant, pursued it no further, to my great relief.

Presently the carriage stopped before a large and handsome dwelling, and although I knew that Mrs. Wharton was in possession of a very comfortable income, I was not prepared for the elegance I encountered.

My poor brown merino looked sadly out of place beside the rich crimson furniture and splendid mirrors, and had not Mrs. Wharton's nephew made strenuous efforts for my entertainment, I should have subsided into that most forlorn and dreary feeling--homesickness.

"My aunt begged that we should dine at the usual hour," said the gentleman, after I had divested myself of my wraps, "as she was afraid she would not be able to return before eight or nine o'clock; the friend she has gone to see is very ill, in fact dying, and Aunt Lizzie will probably stay until all is over."

"Aunt Lizzie, I thought," has she discarded the name of Rose? I remembered, however, that her initials were R. E. W.

The dinner was charming; my appetite was good. I never had dyspepsia in my life, and I ate to the luxuriant food, so daintily prepared, with an enjoyment that must have been quite amusing to my companion.

About an hour after we had sat down, while we were leisurely partaking our dessert, and discussing the rights of women, the butler handed a note to my *vis-à-vis*. After asking me to excuse him, he opened and read it. The look of surprise and consternation in his face was simply appalling.

"Has anything happened to your aunt?" I timidly inquired, feeling very uncomfortable under the scrutinizing gaze of his dark gray eyes.

"No, no--that is, nothing of importance--but I do not think she will be back to-night. But, Miss Rose--your name is Miss Rose, is it not?"

I put down the orange I was peeling, and looked the amazement I felt.

"My name is Miss Rose Terry," I replied, with as much dignity as I could assume.

"Yes, certainly--I beg your pardon--but, Miss Rose--Miss Terry, I mean--you will make yourself comfortable for the night--until my aunt returns, I should say!"

His confusion seemed very strange, after this late graceful self-possession; but, attributing it all to the contents of the note--alas! I did not then dream of the information it conveyed--I endeavored to make the best of it, and told him not to be uneasy, as I had no doubt but that Mrs. Wharton would return early in the morning.

Books and music formed the principal subjects of conversation, during the few hours I passed with Mrs. Wharton's nephew; and so pleasant and agreeable did he prove, that I began to like him very much, and quite forgot my embarrassment at remaining so long alone with a stranger.

At breakfast, next morning, we chatted away quite like old friends; and when the meal was over my companion asked me to walk into the library for a few moments.

I complied with his request, made rather gravely, feeling a sensation pass through me that something was going to happen.

"Please be seated, Miss Terry," he began. "I regret that I am obliged to explain a very strange mistake--and I beg your pardon for keeping you in ignorance through last evening, but, believe me, I did so only because I wished you to have a pleasant and comfortable rest after your long journey."

I could say nothing to this preparatory speech, for my heart was throbbing at such a furious rate I dare not trust my voice.

"My aunt," he continued, "expected a lady friend, named Miss Annie Rose, to arrive by yesterday, and being called from home unexpectedly, she commissioned me to be her escort from the depot to the house. She spoke of Miss Rose's traveling dress being brown, and hence my mistake in assuming you. The note I received last evening apprised me of my error, for in it Aunt Lizzie informed me that Miss Rose, learning the illness of Mrs. Talmage, had arrived by an earlier train, and gone directly to the house of Mrs. Talmage, so that she might see her once more while alive. If you will accept my apologies for causing you this inconvenience and delay in your plans, I will be truly grateful for your forbearance, and will do all in my power to rectify my mistake as speedily as possible."

What could I say? He was so sincerely sorry, I could not find fault with him. With hot cheeks, I explained my part in the misunderstanding.

"My friend is Mrs. Rose Wharton. She lives on Charles Street. If you will--"

"I shall deliver you safely into her hands, Miss Terry," he interrupted, "and will immediately order the carriage. But first I must thank you for your goodness in so readily granting pardon for my inadvertence."

When we arrived at Mrs. Rose Wharton's door, he turned to me, and taking my hand, said:

"Miss Terry, you have shown me great mercy. Will you allow to your favor one more kindness, and grant me permission to call this evening and renew the acquaintance which, although commenced under such untoward circumstances, has yet afforded me such happiness?"

The look which accompanied these words was so beseeching that my heart yielded, and I murmured an almost inaudible "yes," which favor he acknowledged by a slight pressure of my hand.

Mrs. Wharton and I had a hearty laugh over my adventure; and when, the next evening, she was completely charmed with both his manner and appearance.

The acquaintance, commenced so strangely, progressed rapidly, and, before my visit was half over, I had good reason to hug my old brown merino with a grateful heart for being the unconscious instrument in bringing me so much happiness.

I afterward had the pleasure of seeing Miss Annie Rose's brown suit. Need I say it was far superior to mine a brain-new-three-dollars-a-yard material, covered with expensive trimmings, could be to a seventy-five cent merino which was in its second season.

"Never mind," said my lover, as I pointed out the difference; "you shall have as many ruffles and flounces as you like hereafter; but this brown dress is simply perfect, for it contains my Rosa."

Modern Cinderellas.

BY FREDERICK S. MILLS.

"Who is that, Esther?"

"Only the 'sewing girl,' mamma," responded the young lady addressed. "She has been trying the bodice of my new dress--the one I am to wear on 'Florian's' birthday, you know."

Only the sewing girl! The contemptuous to me in which these words were uttered entered deeply into poor Minnie's sensitive soul. When will ladies of 'genteel' society learn that others, with themselves, possess some delicacy of feeling?

But gentility is seldom associated with gentleness nowadays.

"Oh, dear me!" said Mrs. Letitia Morton. "Don't say another word, I pray. I thought it was Madam Garcia, and the fortunate proprietress of the mansion known as 'Moreton House' passed up the wide oak staircase, with a gentle sniff of her highly gifted nose, which indicated that in her opinion quarts of eau de cologne were required to purify the atmosphere from the sewing girl's contaminating breath."

Madam Garcia was the lady who was imparting to the fair Esther a superficial knowledge of French and music.

"May I rest here for a short time?" timidly asked Minnie. "It is raining very hard."

"Oh, certainly," Esther replied. "You will find a seat in the hall, and she followed her mother into her boudoir where the two women found delight in unobtrusively canvassing the eligibility of all the fashionable young men of their acquaintance, in view of Minnie's impending marriage with the fair Esther; and upon the result of such conversations they baited their gentle hook, or perhaps I should have written, 'arranged their aristocratic fishing apparatus, and prepared to struggle with the flat-fish and flounders of society's mispissed stream.'"

"I am confident, mamma," Esther said, triumphantly, "I shall bring Florian Belmonte to my feet! Wait until after the birthday festival, and then see if I haven't some very important news to impart."

"I hope to goodness you may, Esther. You must really struggle for a position, or it will go hard with you, I fear after my death."

Mrs. Letitia Morton's sole wealth was the house in which she lived, and an annuity purchased with the remains of her late husband's fortune, in order that appearances might be suitably maintained.

"Don't talk of death, mamma! You know my sensibilities," said the younger lady.

Both ladies flattered their perfumed fans for the space of half an hour. Meanwhile Minnie Warren, the sewing girl, sat patiently in the entrance hall, as near to the door as possible, waiting for the storm-king to abate his fury.

anon there came a loud and impatient rapping, and the door was opened by a young man, whose attachment was somewhat vague in its pretension. He was evidently too young for a man servant, and too old to pass for a page but he was the general factotum and body-guard of the family, nevertheless.

"Appearances were studied" at Moreton House.

Florian Belmonte entered, and handed his card. He caught sight of Minnie, sitting in the corner of the doorway, and an exclamation of surprise escaped him.

"It cannot be," he said, "and yet how very like! I trust you will pardon me, young lady, the resemblance is so striking. Is not your name Warren?"

"I am called Minnie Warren," she simply said.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed. "The daughter of my old friend and tutor. Why, Minnie, shall I call you Minnie? Do you know that I have been seeking you for many months? Will you oblige me by taking a seat in my carriage, and permit me to escort you to your home? My stay here will be very brief. You need not be afraid of me," he added.

"I am Florian Belmonte, of whom you have doubtless heard your father speak."

"Oh, yes, sir!--indeed I have, for he loved you very much."

"Well, well, to think that we should meet in this odd way? What are you starting at, young man?--This is the sewing girl, and juvenile man-servant."

"Why don't you hand the young lady to a seat in the carriage at the door? I will not detain you, Miss Warren; I have much to hear and tell."

The young man opened his eyes very wide and obeyed the bidding, while Florian mounted the staircase and awaited the return to the gate man-servant, to announce him to the ladies.

It was making only a passing call, to renew the invitation to his birthday merry-making. He would be of full age on that particular day, and he was desirous of thoroughly pleasing his fair sisters, who had issued the cards of invitation upon his behalf. Upon leaving, he remarked:

"I am becoming quite the hero of a romance. Miss Moreton, would you believe it? I discovered a young lady seated in your entrance hall, as I came in, and she actually proved to be the daughter of my old tutor, whom I have been seeking ever since the good man's death. I suppose I should thank you for the introduction. Have you known Miss Warren very long? He added maliciously, as he noticed the gathering frown which Esther's fair brow could not conceal.

"I presume it is the dressmaker you allude to, Mr. Belmonte, she replied coolly.

"Dressmaker, is she? Well, well; but I might have known that the daughter of George Warren would never care to lead an idle life," he said, with biting sarcasm. He was avenging Minnie for her seat in the passage.

"Good-day, ladies, and remember Friday week, or my sisters will blame me for your absence!"

"Is that the way in which you bring him to your feet, Esther?" asked her mother, dolefully, as the pair watched the light of Minnie in a corner of the carriage, as he rapidly drove away.

"How could I know the young woman was the daughter of his tutor? or even that he would call this morning?" Esther replied, indignantly. "If I had known that, she should have 'tramped through the rain.'"

"She is favored with a seat in his carriage. I suppose she will also be honored with an invitation," said the elder lady.

"If that is so, and she hasn't the sense to stay away," said Esther, emphatically. "I'll very speedily bring the lady to a sense of her position."

Even the venom of these remarks was wasted, for the origin of them was

speeding away in Florian's neat little equipage, innocent of the tantalization she had caused--innocent even of what a spiteful world might say, if it knew that the demure little lady whom Florian had in tow was only a seamstress and a dressmaker. She only remembered that he was her father's friend, and that she had seen him now and then, when she was a very little girl.

"Now, my dear little Minnie," he said to her, somewhat patronizingly, "after all with genuine sincerity, I am quite satisfied that you have not been deceived since my dear old tutor's death. I read of his demise in the newspapers, and knowing that he must have left your little self to battle single-handed with a cruel world, I have been endeavoring to find you out--hitherto without success."

"Did you love my father so very much?" she inquired, timidly, yet somewhat proud to learn that all this had been done for the sake of her father's name and memory, and in no way on account of her poor unlettered self.

"Indeed I did," Florian replied, looking very much as if the daughter was about to perpetrate the affection in her own right. She was unconscious of this, however. "Didn't he accompany me safely across the labyrinth of learning the mellowed wisdom of the heathens, and the foggy perplexities of modern genius? Didn't I use to imagine that his spectacles had so nothing to do with the way in which he illustrated some gigantic problem to my youthful mind? And in after life, Minnie," he added, seriously, "didn't he save me from many a pitfall, and help me along many a troubled path? You must tell me how he died."

She told him of his late preceptor's last weary illness, and dwelt with touching tenderness upon his final words; and as the tears of glad memory, the solemn happiness of a great regret sparkled in her eyes, the young man learned what a lovable child she was, and how little prepared for the hard-working life that was hers.

She told him of her occupation, and of her secret conviction when the honesty of her life visited upon her. She told him of the petty tyrannies which were daily hers to suffer, until the innocence of her soul was almost fading in the bitterness of despair.

"It is my turn now to influence and protect," said Florian, "even as your father's goodness influenced and protected me!"

It was strange what an enormous quantity of dressmaking his sisters needed from that day forth, and the sudden interest developed in Mr. Florian Belmonte as to the pattern and texture of a lady's robe was remarkable, to say the least.

Our little Cinderella was to meet with her reward. Her prince's carriage it was that brought her to the ball; but the gentle Esther did not carry out her malicious intentions, for a very substantial reason.

Minnie was neatly, yet suitably attired. She sang gracefully upon Florian's arm, as he acknowledged the congratulations of his guests upon the anniversary; and in returning thanks, he even had the hardihood to introduce the 'sewing girl' as his future wife.

Cinderella was proud and very happy, and Esther Moreton retired in deep disgust, and she baited her hook afresh. I have not yet heard that her angling has been successful."

The freshness and purity of an innocent heart must meet with its reward at last. Contempt and scorn may be its portion for a time, but if the beautiful petals of virtue survive the treacherous storm, and live through the mud, clouded miserable day, they will unfold to the admiration of the world, when the gaudier and sickly-smelling flowers shall have withered and passed away.

Uncle Dapplebre's Gift.

BY HELEN FOREST GRAVES.

"A letter for you, Mr. Herbert!"

Mr. Herbert Dapplebre was sitting at his late breakfast in truth and in fact, he never was early at anything and the little ornate clock on the mantel pointed to the hour of eleven. There was a clear fire of cannon coal in the grate, and a net-work of sunbeams braiding themselves across the embrasure of the bay-window, and all the externals of the snug apartment were pleasant to look upon.

Mr. Herbert himself, with silky black hair, and white and delicate as he, and hands white and delicate as they, was seated in a comfortable easy-chair, with a blue cashmere morning-gown wrapped artistically around him, and his feet thrust into a pair of velvet slippers. An involuntary smile rippled over his face as the boarding-house maid-of-all-work laid the letter beside his plate.

"And there's a great big bundle

down stairs, as came by express, directed to you, sir," added the girl.

"Bring it up, Betsy bring it up!" said Mr. Dapplebre, beamingly. "Ah! my appeals have touched the old fellow's heart at last, have they? I told Minnie he'd be pretty certain to do something for us, if only we could manage to penetrate the outer crust of his miserliness and avarice!"

As he soliloquized thus, he broke the seal of the envelope and took out its inclosure a page of blue paper, written in cramped and old-fashioned calligraphy.

"My dear Miss Murray: Yours of 1st day rec'd. Glad to hear you are to be married to so lovely and accomplished a young lady. Rhinoceros and general old age prevent me from paying my compliments in person, but you have my best wishes."

"Confound his best wishes!" irreverently interpolated the graceless nephew.

"An I suppose that you will expect your old uncle to do something handsome to you?"

"Sensible old fellow! Of course I do! muttered Herbert Dapplebre, with a brightening countenance.

"So that I don't (pr express) a suit of clothes suitable for the festive occasion, and as good as new, only having been worn by myself twice (at funerals). Hoping that this letter will find you, as it leaves me, in the enjoyment of tolerable health, I remain, with best compliments to the young lady, your loving uncle."

"DANIEL DAPPLEBRE."

The half sheet of blue paper dropped from Herbert Dapplebre's palsied hand. His face blanched to a tallowy paleness.

"A suit of Uncle Dapplebre's second hand clothes!" he gasped, staring at the prodigious brown paper parcel that lay, tied in numerous small twine knots, on the floor at his feet. "Does he suppose I would condescend to wear such out-of-fashion things? And I expected a check for five hundred dollars at the very least! The unprincipled old hunk! the stingy, mean, old vampire! I might have known better than to look for anything else from him!"

With a face that was a study of various expressions, Mr. Herbert Dapplebre cut the interlacing twine with his knife, and removed the layers of brown paper which enveloped the precious gift, thereby revealing an ancient-fashioned and meliorated suit of bottle-green, decorated with tarnished gilt buttons, and finished off with a velvet collar of stupendous size.

Herbert Dapplebre laughed bitterly the sort of laugh that has no ringing under-current of mirth in its sound, as he spurned the roll from him with his foot.

"He knows better than to think I could use such trash as that!" said he.

And seizing up the obnoxious parcel with one hand, he opened the sash of the bay-window with the other, and flung it out into the middle of the street, nearly knocking off the hat of a traveling itinerant in rags and bottles, by the mad course of the flying meteor.

The good-humored Irishman ducked his head, thereby unwittingly jerking the reins; the old horse stopped so likewise did the jingle of the tin bells.

"Shure, sir, ye've made a mistake," said Pat; "wid such an elegant suit of clothes entirely!"

"No, I have not," growled more Mr. Dapplebre, growing more wrathful than ever. The idea of him, Herbert Dapplebre, being compelled to argue with a rag-and-bottle-man. "Take 'em and go to Jericho with 'em!"

And he closed the sash of the bay-window with considerable emphasis, as he spoke.

Miss Minnie Murray was sitting in her boudoir--as it was the fashion to call a young lady's sitting-room the next day, when Herbert Dapplebre came in to help direct the wedding-cards, that lay like a drift of geometrical snow-flakes on the table. She was a pretty, plump girl, with big china-blue eyes, a pink-and-white complexion, like apple-blossoms; and yellow hair, very much crimped, while her neat black silk dress, buttoned with tiny knobs of coral, fitted her "like a glove, as the modistes say."

"Well, dear," smiled Miss Murray, "what's the matter?"

"How do you know that anything is the matter, little Witch of Endor?"

"I can tell by your looks," retorted she, laughing.

"I have heard from my Uncle Dapplebre," said Herbert, with a grimace.

"Indeed!"

"And he has sent me a wedding-present," added the young man.

"Oh, Herbert, do tell me what it is!" cried Minnie, with heightened color and sparkling eyes.

"A second-hand suit of clothes, made of cheap bottle-green cloth, and got after the fashion of those worn by Shem, Ham and Japhet, when they came out of the ark."

"Herbert, you are not in earnest?"

"But I am, Minnie!"

"What a shame!" cried Minnie, impulsively. "And how very eccentric he must be. Just the very sort of old man one reads about in novels, you know."

"Then I prefer old men in real life," said Herbert Dapplebre. "Come, let's get to work, Minnie. 'What's new?' list? and where are the inkstand and pens?"

"But what did you do with it, Herbert the suit of clothes, I mean?"

"Tossed it out of the window, of course. What should I do with it?"

"Was that quite wise?" said thrifty little Miss Murray. "You might have exchanged it, at one of the second-hand stores, for something useful toward our housekeeping."

"That isn't my way of doing business!" said Mr. Dapplebre, with a scornful elevation of his eyebrows.

The hours, and days, and weeks bore on Capid's wings, flitted swiftly away, and the evening before the wedding came at last.

Minnie Murray has taken Mr. Dapplebre into the dining room to see the table all spread for the morrow's collation, and judge how it would be best to cut the big cake, when suddenly there came a knock at the door, and the voice of Priscilla, the maid, in remonstrating cadence.

"He would come in, Miss Minnie, please," said Priscilla.

"And why shouldn't I, being I'm the bridegroom's own uncle?" said a voice and in walked--

"My Uncle Dapplebre!" cried Herbert, with a tragic start that would have made his fortune on the stage.

A little, weazened, yellow-faced man with sharp black eyes, like those of a billions rat, two gray fringes above them, and a square, protruding chin, stood before them.

"How do you do, Nephew Herbert?" said he. "How do you do, niece that it is to be? You got the suit of clothes?"

"Yes, sir, I got them," stammered Herbert, but--

"Have you worn 'em yet?"

"No, sir--at least--"

"When you do," interrupted Uncle Dapplebre, "look in the left-hand vest-pocket. There's a five-hundred-dollar bill there, folded up in a scrap of newspaper. I thought it was the safest way to send my present."

Herbert grew as pale as the frosting on the big wedding-cake; Minnie flushed as scarlet as the roses in her hair; Uncle Dapplebre chuckled, as he looked from one to the other.

"I'm a plain man," said he, "but I've a little ready money for such an occasion as this. You'll find it there all right."

"I beg your pardon, sir," gasped Herbert, feeling as if he should choke. "I didn't know of your kind intentions, and as I hadn't any particular use for the clothes, I gave them to a poor man."

"What poor man?"

"I don't know him from Adam," confessed Herbert, in despair.

"So that is your way of doing things!" said Uncle Dapplebre, with calm and concentrated daudgeon. "Perhaps you think I have a chest full of five-hundred-dollar bills to give away? I'm sorry I can't oblige you in that respect."

"You are not going, sir?" pleaded Miss Murray.

"Yes, I am! I am going home to alter my will!" said Uncle Dapplebre.

He was as good as his word and three months afterward, on his sudden demise, his disconsolate relatives discovered that his by no means inconsiderable property was left to a fatly-endowed orphan asylum.