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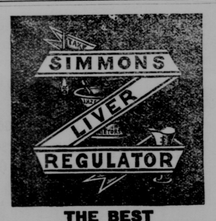

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HIS MISSION.

They came through the meadows of childhood
together hand in hand,
And often they talked of the future that waited in Manhood's Land,
And one saw ever the glory that crowns the peaks of fame
In that strange and mystical country that no man giveth a name.
"Up to the heights whose beauty lures me by night and day
I will some time find, my comrade, with kindred souls, the way."
And because his eyes turned ever to the heights he could not see
The beauty that was about him. Blind to it all was he.

But the other saw all the flowers that grew by the paths they trod,
He read on the hills and the meadows the wordless poems of God.
He saw the sin and the sorrow that were round him everywhere,
He spoke kind words to a comrade and lightened his load of care.
"Here is work for my hands, my brother. I find it on every side.
It may not be grand, like a hero's, but I shall be satisfied
If into the lives of others I bring some hope and cheer
And feel that the world is better because of my being here."

The ways their feet had followed parted in Manhood's Land,
And he whose eyes saw only the peaks far off and grand
Strove steadily on toward them and paused not once by the way
To help and comfort a comrade, as some time the weakest may.
He climbed up the hills and over their summit passed from sight,
And today he dwells in the glory that crowns the mystic height,
But no man's heart thrills warmly when another speaks his name,
Ah, that soul has need of pity which feeds on the husks of fame!

But he who saw all about him work for his willing hands
Has done it faithfully, nobly, as by a king's commands.
He has helped the weak and the weary, he has comforted those who mourn,
And no man knoweth the number of burdens he has borne!
He sang, when his heart was heavy, songs full of hope and cheer,
And his songs brought comfort and courage, and all were glad to hear,
And men and women and children speak lovingly his name.
Ah, happy is he who findeth that love is better than fame!

—Eben E. Rexford in Youth's Companion.

SIGHTLESS EYES.

John Loudon sat alone in a corner of his library and listened. "But, Pia, dearest, what strange questions you ask me!"

The voice was that of a young girl, tender and childlike in its pleading tone. It crept into the heart of the lonely man and made him tremble.

"My little country lassie, I cannot help it."

This was from another mouth and a voice more womanly in its compass.

"It is my duty as his sister and as sacred to me as God's commands."

"Speak more softly, dear. Your brother can hear every word you are saying."

Pia subdued her voice to a whisper.

"I shall never allow a girl to become enamored of him. Never! If such a thing should come to pass, I will keep it away from him. What nonsense, such silly infatuation! Love, yes, real love until death! Powerful, eternal! I know he is waiting for such love. He yearns for it and perhaps will never possess it. It drives me mad to think of it."

The older woman pressed her hands to her eyes to crush out the tears.

Clarice, the country girl, stood before her with wildly beating heart. What could she say? Her vocabulary was not large and her idea of life very simple. Infatuation, love! They meant the same to her. Love—powerful, eternal love! She glanced at the blind man sitting by the window. The dark, sharp profile was turned away, and the sightless eyes looked out into the night.

Now his face turned toward her. He felt that her gaze was riveted upon him. The voices in the opposite corner were hushed. Pia was busy with some dainty embroidery. Clarice walked over to the man by the window, a soft blush mantling her cheeks. He felt her coming and smiled.

"How are you getting along with your work, Mr. Loudon?"

"That's not my name."

"John," whispered the girl softly.

"That's better. You must call me John always if you want me to call you Clarice."

"But I am only a country girl."

"Yet we are friends."

"And such good friends! Shall I help you, John? Don't you want me to write for you?"

"Thank you, no, Clarice. I can do nothing today."

"Why, John? Am I too slow?"

"Oh, no. It's all my fault. I—I cannot dictate to you."

Pia Loudon watched with passionate care over the welfare of her only brother. She had inherited that all absorbing sentiment from her dead mother. Since the accident that robbed him of his sight when a child John Loudon had been the center of the family. He bore his misfortune with fortitude, as something which could not be helped. His philosophical studies, pursued under the guidance of an excellent tutor, helped to fill out the empty hours of his life, and his clever essays found ready publishers. Pia had forced her own heart to silence as well as the handsome neighbor, whom she loved and who loved her.

"I am the mainstay of John's life. First he, then"—

Two months ago Clarice had come to the home of her friends. She was an orphan distantly related to the Loudons. Her father was an army officer, who lived a quiet, uneventful life in the country after his retirement from active service. He died suddenly and left his only child helpless. Her mother she had never known.

Pia was delighted with the charming girl, whom she had taken at once to her heart. Clarice was bright, tender, resolute and proud—a mixture of which Pia thoroughly approved.

When tea time came, they gathered again in John's cozy library. The blind man sat by the window, and the two girls busied themselves in the other part of the room.

Clarice took up the silver tray with John's tea and carried it over to him. Her step was almost inaudible as it sank into the velvet carpet. But he turned his face toward her before she had half traversed the room.

"How well you hear, John!"

"Yes, and I feel things even more."

She placed the cup on the little table, and as she did so her dress brushed his hand.

"You have on your white dress, Clarice!"

"Yes, because you said that you disliked black."

"I dislike all dark colors."

"How did you know about the white dress?"

"I felt it."

"You feel everything!"

She stood before him and waited.

"Would you feel it if some one loved you?"

"If some one loved me?"

There was a pause. Then the blind man said with emphasis:

"Certainly, and I have never been mistaken."

"And if it were true that some one loved you, should you know?"

"Love me?"

His heart beat madly.

"A girl!"

"Clarice!" cried the blind man, full of glad presentiment.

"Do you feel it, John?"

He caught her hands and held them fast. Not a sound disturbed their blissful silence. Then she took his hand and laid it over her trembling breast.

"Yes, I feel it! You love me, you, Clarice!"

He sprang to his feet and shouted like a playful schoolboy.

"Pia, sister, come to me! I have found a wife!"

The sister's eyes had been more farseeing, and she had left the room some time ago.

* * * * * *

On the day on which John Loudon was married to Clarice, Pia kissed the cheeks of the young bride, her hair, her mouth and her hands, full of tender gratitude.

"Make him happy, and I will lay down my life for you! Your duties, Clarice, will be greater than those of other women. But in return you will have a happier and more grateful husband. How lovely you are in your bridal gown! If he could only see you!"

"Be quiet, Pia. He must not hear such things!"

But the sister continued with a sad smile:

"Alas, you will never be seen by him!"

"He loves me. Is not this happiness enough?"

"Will you never long to be seen?"

Why does she whisper the words excitedly, almost threateningly? Clarice looked questioningly at her.

"Long to be seen? What do you mean?"

"Forgive me. No, you are different from other women. You are not vain, and can forego the pleasure of being seen. I had such dreadful thoughts last night."

Clarice shook her head. She could not understand her sister.

* * * * * *

Three years had gone by since they were married, and Clarice's favorite place was still at her husband's feet. There she sat against his knees, and he stroked the fair face and soft curls with caressing fingers.

In this position she could look up into his face and see his eyes, which were brown and gentle and not at all as if they were sightless. Tears gathered in hers with tender compassion.

"What a beautiful face you have!" flattered the wife. It made him smile.

"And I like your eyes, half veiled by the lids as they are, so different from other blind people, who have that wide open, meaningless stare."

"You are right; that would be very disagreeable. When I was a boy, I saw a blind man stare at me once with such wide open eyes, and I made up my mind that if I ever should lose my sight I would avoid that stare. There is only one thing that would make me look at you in a way that would frighten you, if—if you should ever do me a wrong!"

She knew he was fond of teasing her.

* * * * * *

They lived not far from the city during the winter months. John Loudon desired that his young wife should see something of the world, even though he could not accompany her everywhere.

"Are you not going to Wadsworth today? I would like to have that picture finished."

"No, John, I want to stay at home with you. I don't care to go to the studio alone."

"I cut a sorry figure in an artist's studio."

"Could you not amuse yourself at the piano while I sit for the picture?"

"Take the maid with you. I will write in the meantime."

It was John who wanted Clarice's picture painted by one of the most renowned portrait painters of the day, whom they had met at a social gathering.

"I want our children to see how beautiful you were in your youth."

"How do you know that I am beautiful?"

"I know it, Clarice. I can see you plainly before me."

"Then tell me how I look."

"Beautiful, lovely, sweet, dear heart!"

"But the face, the color!" pressed Clarice.

"Red as the rose, is it not?"

"Ah, no. Pale—the color of a pearl. And the dress?"

"White."

"White, of course."

"And lace across the breast."

He touched her arms. "Bare to the shoulders, as if you were going to a ball?"

"Wadsworth desires it so on account of the flesh tints."

"Ah, yes, yes!"

"I wish you could see me! It is too bad!"

The words, nervously uttered, had escaped her lips ere she was aware of it.

A shadow passed over John's face. He could not answer; her words and the tone in which she spoke them surprised him. But she did not seem to notice it.

When the servant entered the room some time afterward and called his master, he made no answer. John Loudon was not asleep, but he seemed as if stunned by a blow.

Was Clarice aware of the meaning of Wadsworth's looks and words? Three times she had been in the studio with him alone. Ah, yes, she understood, as far as a woman can understand.

And yet she was here again today without blushing for her coming. Pale as the pearl with which she had compared the color of her face, rapturously beautiful and full of that consciousness that some one's eyes feasted upon her beauty! She listened to words which her husband must not hear! Wadsworth came nearer and nearer. She felt his hot breath sweep over her face, and now his hand touched her arm, her throat, her bare shoulders. Not the hand of her husband, but another's! Clarice almost lost consciousness, and for a moment closed her eyes. A startled cry escaped her lips. What was it that she had seen suddenly rise up before her? Not a face, only a pair of eyes, wide open, staring, like those of a blind man trying to see! The eyes of her husband, as she had never seen them before.

Clarice sprang to her feet, and, stumbling across the room, grasped her cloak and hastened down the stairs. "Home, home," she cried, to the husband, whose eyesight, whose life she was, and whom she loved with every quivering sense.

When she entered John Loudon's library, she found him sitting as we have seen him last. He raised his face at her approach. The lids drooped over the burning eyeballs. He did not call her as was his wont. He waited.

"Dear John, I will come in a moment, as soon as I remove this dress."

Then she sat down by his feet, with her head caressingly pressed against his knee. She kissed his hands and told him again and again how dearly she loved him with all her heart.

And he! What else could he do than believe in this adorable woman, and banish all doubts and perplexities.

"Will the portrait be finished soon?"

"I think so. At least I need not go to the studio any more."

"Clarice," said the husband, after a pause, "why were you angry before you went away? You were never so before! Must I become accustomed to it?"

"No, no, beloved! It shall never happen again. I was nervous, like all foolish women. Forgive me!"

She arose and laid her hand tenderly over his eyes.

"Your poor, dear eyes!" whispered Clarice, and the tears trickled down her cheeks.

John Loudon smiled, as one in a dream. It was a dream, a hideous nightmare, and his wife was still his.

The symphony in white hangs in John's library. Clarice desired that it should be so.

The pale face, the soft lace and the white background of plush—a mene tekel for the penitent woman.—From the German in St. Louis Republic.

TALES OF DELAWARE SHAD.

Some of the Big Ones That Were Caught In Former Years.

The reader who is interested in fish and fishing can find in a report of the Pennsylvania fish commission a deal of matter about old and new methods of taking fish, stories (authentic) of big catches and big fish and descriptions of the methods adopted by the pirates who deplete the waters regardless of the rights of others.

In the early days of the Delaware settlements neither the Dutch, German nor English settlers on the lower part of the stream cared enough for shad to use nets of any kind in taking them. It was not the proper thing socially to eat shad. If any one of social distinction was led by a liking for the flavor of the fish into eating it, he had to cook it and eat it on the sly.

And there is the story of the use of shad in Philadelphia. The low prices tempted many master mechanics to keep their apprentices almost altogether on fish diet. The apprentices objected to shad, and a bitter, wordy strife ensued. No strike followed, but the youngsters triumphed so far that the law relating to indentures was changed so that the boys were not to be fed on fish more than twice a week. The exclusion of the shad from the bill of fare was followed by an evil they knew not of. What was known as the Merino sheep craze swept over the country about that time. Sheep became cheaper than fish, and the boys got mutton and molasses in generous quantities instead of shad.

If it was not in good form socially to eat shad on the lower Delaware, it was nevertheless quite the proper thing to do so on the upper waters of both the Delaware and the Susquehanna. "Country folks from a radius of fifty miles came to the Susquehanna to get their winter supply."

The record for a day's catch belongs to Tullytown creek, in Hadley, Pa., for "on the 1st day of May, 1833, 33,000 shad were taken."

"The fish also ran very large in my young days," said one of the veracious old inhabitants. "Eight pound fish were very common, and often they ran larger."

One story is related of a man who traded twenty barrels of shad for "a good Durham cow." But sometimes so many of the fish were taken that the price went to 3 and 4 cents each, and one case is noted of a great catch that brought but 1 cent each.

It is worth noting that in describing the size of the fish three are referred to that weighed 13 pounds. The very largest of all was taken by Charles Vansciver at Badger's island, in the Delaware. It weighed 13 3-4 pounds and "was purchased by Christian Larzelere, Esq., a judge in Burlington county." — Philadelphia Times.

Unwelcome Wedding Guests.

A naturalist, who is an ardent student and absentminded, recently celebrated his silver wedding. Many guests were invited for the occasion. As the first guest arrived, one of the daughters was sent to summon the father from his study. When they reached the room, the daughter noticed that her father carried in his hand a small wooden box, and, as he shook hands with the nearest guest, she saw him drop it. The cover rolled off, but she gave a sigh of relief when she saw that the box was apparently empty. The naturalist, however, uttered a cry of dismay and instantly went down on his hands and knees in an attempt to gather up something. "Have you spilled anything, father?" she asked. "Spilled anything!" he echoed, in evident indignation at her calm tone. "I have lost fifty fleas that I have just received from Egypt." The effect of this intelligence on the family was nothing in comparison with the effect the catastrophe had upon the company before the evening was over, and the only thing that the naturalist said to his friends in answer to their congratulations upon his happy married life was to ask that if they carried any of his Egyptian fleas they would return the insects to him.

A Great Detective.

Vidocq, the great French detective, had so excellent a memory for names and faces that after having seen a criminal once and learned his name he never forgot him, but would often identify him under the most subtle disguises.—Paris Figaro.

Girl Wanted.

"Why is my wife like one in the wilderness?" asked Boggs of his friend Foggs.

"I give it up," said Foggs.

"She is crying for help," and Boggs smiled over the idiom of our language.—Detroit Free Press.

Got Them Tender.

It was one of Platt Evans' pleasures to teach his friends how to purchase tender geese, though he could not always get them in the market. One morning he saw a lot and inquired how many there were. "About a dozen," was the reply.

"W-w-well," said Platt, "I k-k-keep a b boarding house, and my b-b-b-boarders are the biggest e-eaters you ever s-s-saw. P-p-pick out n-nine of the t-toughest you've g-got."

The farmer complied and laid aside the other three tender ones. Platt picked them up carefully, and, putting them in his basket, said, "I b-b-believe I'll take these three."—San Francisco Argonaut.

HER IDEAL MALE MATE.

Elizabeth Bisland's Description of the National Husband of America.

There is a theory that the patient, unexacting financial agent who is supposed to typify the genus husband in America—who, like charity, suffereth long and is kind, thinketh no evil, and giveth all his goods—is woman's ideal of a mate, but this is a slander. The dull submission of the overladen ass is not the quality which ordinarily excites feminine respect.

That brilliant, greedy figure, hung with jewels, who stands aloft in the social car, laying the goad upon the bowed shoulders of the humble, overworked married slave who draws her chariot, is purely a figment evolved out of the notebooks of shallow foreigners rushing express through the country to make a volume of travels.

In reality the American husband is the most exacting of his kind. He demands gayety, physical and mental charm, a high cultivation of all her powers, and an infinity of carefully performed duties from his wife.

If the American woman is brilliant and ornamental it is because the American husband will put up with nothing less. In older civilizations woman finds in married life all the conditions prepared for her; rules made which she has only to obey; a careful code of precedents which she has only to follow.

Here a woman may be within a period of seven days transported from a country boarding school to the most conspicuous position in the land, and without previous training be called upon to receive embassadors and preside at state dinners.

The husband who elevates his wife from the washtub in a mining camp to the palace of a millionaire expects her to create out of the chaos of her previous experiences an ordered social world between the morning and the evening of her first day of wealth—and she does it and likes it, and loudly proclaims that this exacting creature is the most delightful example of husband known.

Curiously enough, the real person is as unlike as possible to the generally accepted picture of the typical American husband, with his narrow, sordid, bank clerk soul, his neglected mind and his cynical estimate of woman as a fantastic child with an insane lust for luxury.

Perhaps the typical husbands of other nations have been as much belied, and the Frenchman is not the sensualist who thrusts the woman's pretty babies from her arms into alien hands in order that her attentions may not for a moment be distracted from himself or her labors diverted from his business.

Perhaps the German wife is not really an unpaid, contemptuously treated upper servant or the English woman the victim of a selfish, domineering master.

At all events, but few women find all the unpleasing characteristics of the type combined in their individual specimens of the national husband.—Elizabeth Bisland in North American Review.

Crust of the Earth.

The crust of the earth, according to Professor John Milne's opinion, is in a constant state of agitation—earth movements being experienced at all times and in all lands—the greatest European crust agitation having its seat in Germany, Japan occupying a similar position in Asia. In both Germany and Japan a tide-like movement too great to be produced by lunar attractions has been observed, the ground being gently lifted every 24 hours and sometimes twice, and in all cases the buildings, trees, etc., stand slightly inclined, like cornstalks in a gentle and steady breeze—in short, the earth is constantly breathing, as it were, the crust making each respiration by a gentle rising and falling, similar to that of the chest in air breathing animals. A certain per cent of this earth crust disturbance is believed to be due to conditions similar to those which bring about earthquakes, this being regarded as especially the fact in respect to Japan, where it has been traced to the continual opening and closing of the broken strata in the main range of the mountains.

Gambling In Triest.

Consul Haggard dwells in his last report from Triest on the increase of gambling in that city. Half a dozen or more provincial lotteries are drawn weekly in Triest, their inferior shares costing only 2 pence or 3 pence. The selection of ticket numbers is often based upon dreams and omens embodied in a systematic form in a published book. It is instructive to watch the buyers of tickets examining the winning numbers posted up in the streets. Every occupation is represented, in the towns and out of them, and the waste of time and money is great. Increasingly large sums, it is said, which if circulated through the legitimate channels of trade would support an industrial population, are now flung from hand to hand in feverish speculation. There are reports that the Austrian government contemplates embodying in its penal code some measures which might at any rate restrict the present gambling mania within narrower limits. It is the fact that the provincial lotteries in which the poorer classes chiefly indulge their speculative tendencies are all government property.—London News.