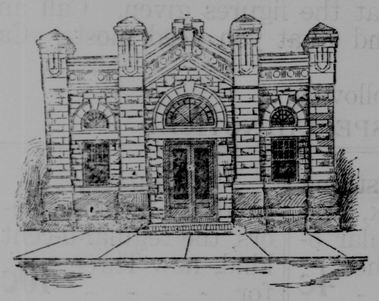
DENTON JOURNAL.

1845. A Family Newspaper:—Devoted to Local and General Intelligence, Agriculture and Advertising,—Independent on all Subjects. Subscription, One Dollar per Annum, in Advance. 1907

VOL. 61. DENTON, MARYLAND: SATURDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2, 1907. NO. 14

The Peoples National Bank

Denton, Maryland



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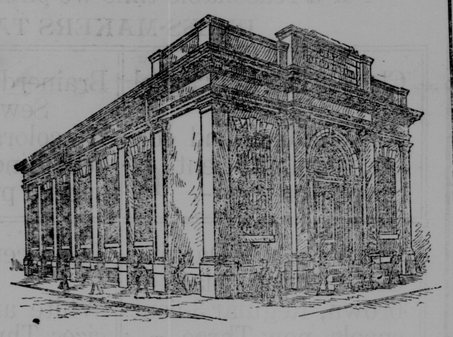

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Mollie's Ministration

By Virginia Leila Wentz

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The elusive fever of a new creation was upon Feltus. In the twilight of his top floor studio he sank into a chair and reached out vaguely for matches and cigarettes. Here, with these alone for light and stimulant, he meant to stay till the great idea itself was clear before him.

Presently the portieres parted. Peter, the old family butler, stood in the doorway. He gazed fleetingly at his young master, whose head had dropped into his hands.

"It's a girl, Mr. Morris," he said.

"Nothing of the sort, Peter," retorted Feltus indulgently, lighting another cigarette. "It's a new picture coming; that's all."

"It's a girl, Mr. Morris, downstairs," Peter said gravely. "That's what the nurse tells me."

"Whew-w-w! A girl! How is Mrs. Feltus?"

"Doing fine, sir. Anything I can get for you, sir?"

"Scotch and seltzer, Peter—Scotch and seltzer; that's all."

But when the good old butler had vanished Feltus' brows went together.

"A girl! By Jove, what do I want with a girl?"

He was suddenly conscious that at some time or other he had entertained visions of a boy, who should be his son and heir—a strong, sturdy little fellow, born into the world with the power to whistle and whittle full fledged. But a girl!

Thus was Mollie's advent into this sublunary sphere greeted by her father. Little by little, however, she won her way straight into his heart. From the day when, bending over a fluff of perturbed lace, a tiny pink fist had been thrust up, by chance caressing his face, and he had laid it against his lips—from that day had dated Mollie's witchery over her sire.

Daddy was the name Mrs. Feltus had taught the child to call him, but, baby fashion, she had twisted it into "Taddy." This title always fetched Feltus an exquisite pleasure, such as could have scarcely have come to him had he been dubbed an R. A.

At first it seemed that Mollie would bring them together again—these two young people who in their married life of less than a score of months had drifted so far apart.

"Isn't that pretty? And how devoted they are, not only to the child, but to each other!"

This was whispered "aside" from one of the Feltus aunts to another. They happened to be calling on the proud parents when Feltus had been hastily summoned away and were privileged in witnessing that pretty little domestic act commonly called a "jumble kiss."

But the happy domesticity was all in the seeming. Further and further they drifted apart—two warring temperaments; he with his warm, impulsive nature; she with her cold, jewel eyed aloofness. She had her white ambitions, her mobile fiats on the possibilities of woman's destiny; he had his artist's work and the habit of devotion to it.

At last it became intolerable, and the storm broke.

There was one unforgettable morning stamped upon Mollie's memory. With a gay little chuckle she had flown off from the vigilance of her nurse, holding her nightgown from her feet, and was about to burst into Taddy's studio to kiss him good morning when strange, angry tones in a torrent of unintelligible words reached her from within. It was not dear mother's voice. Mother's voice was always low and slow and even. This woman's voice was none of those things. But by and by mother herself came out. Mollie half stretched forth her hand to clutch her skirt as she passed, but withdrew it, afraid. Mother's head was held so high, she walked like the angry princess in the fairy book, and there was a bright red spot on either cheek.

All was still in the studio, so the child ran in. Feltus was pacing up and down in his velvet knickerbockers and smoking jacket, his hand behind his back.

"Taddy," Mollie cried gleefully, "I dot away from nurse, I did! I tum to tiss you."

As the baby arms clasped him Feltus sank into a chair, and she climbed to his breast. There was a stillness except for the man's hard, tremulous breaths as he held her closely to him.

On an easel at one end of the room was a canvas in the making. Even in its rough state one could see that it possessed power and insight. It showed a girl, a sumptuous oriental creature, swathed in gay draperies, reclining on a couch. With half closed, sensuous eyes and luring languor she contemplated a jeweled chain which she held up in one hand. Painted above the canvas was the title, "The Snare of the Senses."

"She didn't get the idea, Mollie," Feltus said brokenly at last, looking at his picture far over the child's sunny head. "She thought—good Lord, she thought it was the flesh I meant! She couldn't see it was the jeweled chain."

It was true. This was a painting which required pre-eminently a subjective interpretation. Yet Evelyn Feltus, with her restricted insight, had read it objectively, as she did everything else in life, and had whipped herself into an impotent fury. She couldn't see that it was the jeweled chain which was snaring the woman's senses, the sort of thing that always snares that sort of woman's senses. To Evelyn the woman herself was a snare and the flashing jewels only a part of her.

Over and over in the months that followed Feltus traversed the wretched scene in the studio which had led to their separation. It had been a blow on naked nerves. The woman there walking up and down the room reproaching him seemed not to be Evelyn, his wife. She was a cruel, imperious changeling. One thing had fixed itself upon his mind immediately. To accomplish any work whatever he must go away. Italy? Oh, no! In his present condition he needed an environment that should serve as a tonic rather than weaken with emotional excitement. Norway or Scotland? But both were so far from Mollie! The dear old Canadian woods it should be—the place where as a boy he had been wont to spend his summers.

Now that he had been there for many months one memory in his parting from his wife still hurt him and served as a sort of scourge. The final words spoken between them had been friendly enough (Evelyn was too patrician for anything else), but his artist's eye of unrelenting accuracy showed him that she looked smitten. * * * Ah, in the beginning how he had loved her, his jewel eyed girl bride! "Caskets of beryl, topaz and lapis lazuli," he had been heard to call her eyes. And how he had dreamed that the cool, folded petals of her nature would one day, under his skillful handling, unshroud a latent, gorgeous blooming! His skillful handling! Deft as his fingers were with brushes, how they had bungled with this woman's lot!

If there had come a gradual hope to Feltus' breast that Evelyn might recall him, gradually, too, it had gone. Her silence was as cold as the Canadian winter. But just as the last vestige of hope seemed to have vanished came a telegram:

"Mollie very ill. Wants you. Come at once."

On the small white bed in the dim room Mollie tossed wearily.

"I want Taddy, Taddy, but he won't tum. 'Oh-h,' pressing her little hand to her stomach, "it hurts!"

"Mollie—my baby!" Feltus bent over her, his gaze blurred with tears. One of her quaint, beaming little smiles greeted him. "I jes' knowed you'd tum, Taddy!" she cried.

After the first long embrace a feverish whim seized her. "I want a jumble tiss! Oh, you haven't fordotted, Taddy?' she cried in shrill tones of distress as a constrained silence ensued.

"We must humor her," murmured Evelyn, with downcast eyes. "Even though it is a foolish game, we can pretend."

Presently, with infinite content, the child fell asleep. That is what the physicians had said she needed. Heretofore her rest had all been uneasy dozes, dominated by her unsatisfied wish for her father.

The "game" was over, but Feltus still kept his arm about Evelyn.

"She might waken, you know," he explained, nodding down at the baby cheeks on which the long lashes rested. How still it was in the room! How loudly the cable cars clanged! Presently the man spoke again;

"Don't you think—maybe—for Mollie's sake"— It was then that Evelyn broke in, irreverently, incoherently perhaps, but he understood:

"I know now. It was the chain in the painting. I couldn't see till I overheard some one explaining it at an art exhibition. Oh, I was vulgar, common! I thought"—

"You did not understand me, sweetheart. You never did," Feltus said simply. But there was no hint of reproach in the big, protective gesture with which he tightened his arm about her. "Will you try now, Evelyn?" he added gently.

"Yes," she murmured. "Yes, oh, yes, Morris!"

And Mollie slept—a sound, refreshing sleep. An incipient dimple showed in her cheek and a pretty smile on her baby lips, as if in some fashion she was conscious of the worth of her ministration.

Mozart's Part.

It is said that the time which Mozart most willingly employed in composition was the morning from 6 or 7 o'clock until 10, his hour of rising. After this he did no more for the rest of the day unless he had to finish some particular composition at a given time. He worked very irregularly. At times he could not be drawn from an idea which possessed him. At other times he had a distaste for work. It once happened that he put off some music which he had engaged to furnish for a court concert so long that he had not time to write out the part which he himself was to perform. The Emperor Joseph, who was peeping everywhere, cast his eyes on the sheet from which Mozart appeared to be playing and was surprised to see nothing but lines upon it.

"Where's your part?" he inquired curiously.

"Here," replied Mozart, with a bow, touching his forehead.

Love's Trials.

Bride—There! I knew how it would be. We have not been married a month, and already you have ceased to care for me.

Young Husband—Why, my love, what can you be thinking of? You are dearer to me than ever.

"It isn't so. I know it isn't. You took meals at our house lots of times before we were married, and you scarcely touched anything. Ma said she knew you were truly in love because you had no appetite."

"Of course, dear, but"—

"And now you are actually complaining just because I forgot to get anything for breakfast."—Pearson's Weekly.

Saved the Situation.

"Ha, here comes Ratcliffe with a dagger! My last moment has arrived!" exclaims one of the characters in a new melodrama. Unfortunately, however, the actor representing Ratcliffe had forgotten the dagger and come on the stage without it. But he was equal to the occasion. "Villain," he exclaimed, "thou thoughtst thou sawst a dagger in mine hand. 'Twas thine evil conscience supplied the vision. But I will slay thee with a blow of this strong right hand," which he proceeded to do.

More Positive.

"Well," said Cadley scornfully, "I'll bet you didn't do the proposing. It's a safe bet that your wife asked you to marry her."

"No," replied Henpeck, "you're wrong."

"Oh, come now, be honest."

"No, she didn't ask me; she told me to."—Philadelphia Press.

Absentminded Miss Amy

By Louise J. Strong

Copyright, 1906, by C. H. Sutcliffe

"There are worse things than being an old maid," Miss Amy Colver said serenely.

"Oh, Miss Amy—I didn't mean—I never think of you as being that!" the girl stammered.

"She isn't such a very old maid," Mrs. Wridgely smiled. "And she says truly there are worse things—such as having a blind husband on your hands, which would have been her fate if she'd married Henry Scott, as she came near doing once."

"She wouldn't think so if she were his wife! She'd love him all the more for the affliction. I know I should. If Willie"— Blushing hotly, Elsie ran from the room.

Mrs. Wridgely laughed, but with a keen glance at her sister, who murmured something about the heat, fanning vigorously. Then presently she asked, "Did you say that Henry Scott was blind?"

"That's what Kate wrote. The doctors think his eyes were ruined, and no wonder, running into that fire so. Inflammation set in. He may never see again. It's a good thing he has no family. He's pretty well off, but he'll need all he's got. He'll never work again, and his business will soon go to ruin, with hired help managing it."

Amy said nothing. Mrs. Wridgely regarded her preoccupied face with a slight frown, then closed the subject by remarking briskly:

"Well, fortunately, Henry Scott is nothing to us. I ran over to see what you're going to wear to the reception, Amy."

"The same as usual, I suppose, if I go."

"If you go!" Mrs. Wridgely almost shrieked. "When you know the affair is complimentary to you! Of course you'll go! And you must wear your cream silk. I'll send Ruth to dress you. And, Amy, I want to take the waist and have the sleeves shortened. You have such pretty arms. I'll run up and get it."

"Judge Hale and wife will be there," she resumed, returning to the porch with the waist.

"Be where?" Amy questioned vaguely.

"Well, if you aren't enough to— Be at the reception, of course, and Senator Ellsworth, too; he got back this morning. Mrs. Reed was so afraid they would not be here. I think I'll dress early and come over myself, Amy, or like as not you'll appear in that everlasting black! Of course you are full of your new book, but you owe something to your friends. Do put it out of your mind for this evening. I'll be over early."

"I'm glad it's out about Henry Scott," Mrs. Wridgely communed with herself. "I've been some afraid of the effect on her, but I guess she's forgotten that old affair, and I mentioned the senator on purpose to turn her thoughts. I wish I dare speak plainly to her about Senator Ellsworth. If she were only a little more like other folks! But then, I suppose, he would not find her so attractive."

Mrs. Wridgely had constituted herself first aid to Senator Ellsworth a few months before, when chance enabled her to extract a letter from Amy's mail which was plainly from Henry Scott. She felt justified. Amy would be spared mental disturbance, and, anyway, the letter was probably only a congratulatory note on the success of her book, such as she received constantly. Mrs. Wridgely's hopes concerning the senator were new then, and the brilliancy of the possible position for her sister Amy excused anything.

Amy had been provokingly unappreciative of this advantageous opportunity, as she had been of many others, which was perhaps to be expected of people who wrote books.

Amy sat alone pondering over her lover's peculiar silence. Was it due to jealousy of her success? She had glorified in his magnificent conduct when the papers had told of his plunging again and again into the burning wreck, rescuing women and children, and to her love, that folly and estrangement could not kill, was added hero worship. She had sat silent under the news of his calamity with a control that reassured her sister, but now her fan fell from her grasp, a broken heap.

"Blind! Blind!" she moaned.

The dark eyes that had looked into her heart with a power that no other could ever attain darkened forever.

Her imagination vividly pictured what it would mean to him, so active, so alive to the world and its needs, suddenly imprisoned in darkness, hopeless darkness, dependent upon others, limited to the companionship of hired attendants and his decrepit aunt, his sole relative.

At least she might write him a few sympathetic lines, the fact that she had but now learned of his terrible loss being explanation and justification of her former seemingly heartless indifference. In the privacy of her chamber she gave rein to her emotions, producing that which she hastily reduced to scraps for the wastebasket.

Recalling that other eyes now scanned his letters, she wrote and discarded page after page, finding each short epistle more difficult of composition. In the midst of her perplexity a maid brought in the remodeled garment and an imperative scrawl from Mrs. Wridgely to the effect that the article be tried on immediately and, if not satisfactory, returned for further alteration.

Amy dismissed the maid and donned the garment, her mind turning sentences over and over, still striving to express only the proper amount of interest. Then, as she absently arranged ribbons and lace, there came the firm conviction that to write was impossible; that she must see him as soon as distance would allow.

It would not have happened had Amy been properly chaperoned and companioned instead of maintaining the independence which Mrs. Wridgely often and uselessly deplored. The generously salaried and loyal servants only looked their astonishment when, wearing the elbow sleeved bodice of her elegant reception gown, a black lace fichu and plain traveling hat, Miss Amy announced that she was going on a journey. As she descended the steps she received a large box from a florist's boy, and this she abstractedly carried with her.

She was still carrying it when, after an hour's ride on a train, she walked to the old Scott homestead, at the end of the village, where she had been raised. She had been engrossed in the past, but once inside the gate she was roused to a somewhat embarrassing present. With a painfully beating heart she stole away to the summer house, hoping there to regain self control before ringing the bell. As she entered a voice, speaking from the gloom, startled her.

"Are you back so soon, auntie?"

She would have run away, but a sudden weakness at sight of him, a heavy shade over his bandaged eyes, made her stumble to the bench beside him. He put out a groping hand as if sensing something unusual.

"Is it you, auntie? Is anything wrong—or—who is it?"

The shock of his helplessness swept away everything but tender pity, yearning love and longing to minister to him. She caught the groping hand and kissed it, sobbing with impetuous abandon:

"Oh, Harry, Harry! I came as soon as I knew. I am going to stay with you and take care of you forever. You shall never, never be alone in the darkness again!"

"Why!" he cried. "Why, it must be—it is—Amy! My own Amy!"

His next movements demonstrated that his arms at least were as strong as of old, and Miss Colver submitted to the loving bonds without a struggle.

"Dear," he said gravely when the old misunderstanding and the purport of the purloined letter had been made clear—"dear, I do not mean to let you leave me again, because you might forget to come back, but I must not hold you by false pretense. You came, like a sweet angel, to care for a blind man, but you will not discard me, will you, though my sight be fully restored, as I now have hopes it may be?"

"Oh, Harry!"

The ecstatic cry and the soft, bare arms about his neck were answer enough.

From the crushed box between them there crept a perfume that presently brought unpleasant remembrances to Miss Amy.

"Why," she exclaimed, examining the contents and the accompanying card, "the senator's roses! And I have on my"— She viewed the costume with amazement, a guilty sense of outraged social amenities and her sister's disapproval.

When she had made shamefaced explanation, Henry Scott intimated, with a heartless disregard of the senator's shattered hopes, that the parsonage was close by and that the evening bodice and the roses were plainly in preparation for the wedding that was to occur immediately.

Curiosities of Coffee.

Coffee, as experts are aware, has a very extraordinary property. It is one of the most absorbent matters in existence. Coffee beans placed in a damp room swell and absorb moisture till they nearly double their weight. Here is the chance of the dishonest grocer. Not content with the amount of profit made upon coffee, he places pails of water in a room with piles of uncovered coffee beans, and by swelling the coffee adds something like 50 per cent to his profits. The flavor is ruined, but that does not matter to him. So absorbent is coffee, not only of moisture, but of gases and flavors, that shippers of Brazilian coffee always stipulate that the sacks of fresh Rio beans shall never be carried on a steamer which has raw hides as any part of her cargo. These will taint the coffee more surely than anything else and render it unfit for use. The useful side of this quality of coffee is that in a sickroom a handful or two of fresh roasted and ground beans act as an excellent purifier and deodorizer.—Washington Post.

Trade Signs.

On nearly all street corners even in the largest metropolis of Europe may be found relics of the middle ages and of the earliest times. Take, for instance, the wooden image of a shoe, which every cobbler hangs out above his door. It goes back for its origin to the Rome of the pre-Christian era. In the ruins of the lava buried cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii many shop signs of stone and terra cotta have been discovered, the forerunners of those that for centuries adorned the highways not only of Europe, but of the new world. Among them was the emblem of the shoemaker's trade, a Cupid carrying a dainty pair of women's shoes. But the Romans did not stop there. They used the image of a goat to indicate the dairies, that of a mule driving a mill to point out the bakers' shops and a bush of evergreen to direct the thirsty traveler to a tavern. This particular sign gave rise to the English proverb, "Good wine needs no bush."

Overloaded.

Corned beef hash as made by Senator Hanna's cook was very popular in Washington several years ago. When the head waiter of the senate restaurant wanted hash prepared very carefully he ordered it this way: "One corned beef hash for Senator Hanna." One day when the restaurant was doing a heavy business almost everybody seemed to want corned beef hash. "Corned beef hash for Senator Hanna" had been ordered fourteen times. When the fifteenth order went down to the kitchen the chef shouted: "That's fifteen orders for Senator Hanna! He'd better watch out or he'll founder hisself."

Safe.

"Now, dear," said the hero of the elopement as they boarded the train, "we are safe from pursuit." "And also," said the young girl radiantly, "safe from starvation. Here's a check pa made out to your order."—Exchange.