Our Sweetest Memories.

The sweetest memories of the past
Are often those most full of tears;
They are the ones most apt to last
Throughout the coming course of years.

The last sad words from those we love,
When bidding us a long good-bye;
The last faint smile from dying lips
Which in the grave now quiet lie.

Our eyes will shed some tender tears,
Our trembling lips may mourn and sigh,
Yet who would give those memories up
For all the gifts that gold could buy?

THE MISER'S BEQUEST.

The hour hand of Philip Acre's old-fashioned silver watch was pointing to the figure 8—the snug red curtains shut out the rain and darkness of the March night, and the fire snapped and cracked behind the red-hot bars of the little grate in a most cosy and comfortable sort of way, casting a rosy shine into the thoughtful brown eyes that were tracing castles and coronets in the brightly burning coals.

For Philip Acre was, for once, indulging himself in the dangerous fascinations of a day-dream.

'If I were only rich,' he pondered to himself, 'ah! if! Then good-bye to all those musty old law books; good-bye to mended boots and turned coats, and all the ways and means that turn a man's life into wretched bondage. Wouldn't I revel in new books and delicious paintings, and high-stepping horses? Wouldn't I buy a set of jewelry for Edith—no pale pearls or sickly emeralds, but diamonds, to blaze like links of fire upon her royal throat! Wouldn't I—what nonsense I'm talking though,' he cried suddenly to himself. 'Phil. Acre, hold your tongue. I did suppose you were a fellow of good sense. Here you are, neither rich nor distinguished, but a simple law student, while Edith Wyllis is as far above your moon-struck aspirations as the Queen of Nightherself. She loves me, though—she will wait—and the time may one day come. If only Dr. Wyllis were not so distrustful of a fellow. Hallo! come in there, whoever you are.'

It was only the serving maid of the lodging house, carrying a letter in the corner of her apron, between her finger and thumb.

'Please, sir, the postman has just left it.'

'All right, Katy. Now, then,' he added, as the door closed behind Katy's substantial back, 'let's see what my unknown correspondent has to say. A black seal, eh? Not having any relations to lose, I am not alarmed at the prognostic.'

He broke the seal, and glanced leisurely over the short business-like communication contained within, with a face that varied from incredulous surprise to sudden gladness.

'Am I dreaming?' he murmured, rubbing his eyes, and shaking himself, as if to insure complete possession of his senses. 'No, I'm wide awake and in my right mind; it is no delusion—no part of my waking visions. But who would ever suppose that old Thomas Mortimer, whom I haven't seen since I was a boy of sixteen, and picked him out of the river half dead between cramp and fright, would die and leave me all his money? Why, I'm not the shadow of a relation; but then I never heard that the old man had any kith or kin, so I can't imagine any harm in taking advantage of this odd freak. Rich—am I really to be rich? Is my Aladdin vision to be an actual fact? Oh, Edith, Edith!'

He clasped both hands over his eyes, sick and giddy with the thought that that lovely, far-off star of his adoration, would be brought near to him at last by the magnet of gold.—All those years of patient waiting were to be bridged over by the strange old miser's bequest; he might claim Edith now.

How full of heart sunshine were the weeks that flitted over the head of the accepted lover, brightened by Edith's smile, made beautiful by the soft radiance of Edith's love. There is only one alloying shadow—the almost imperceptible touch of distrust and suspicion with which stern old Dr. Wyllis regarded his future son-in-law. Ah! he feared to trust his only child to the keeping of any man who had not been proved in the fiery furnace of trial.

It was precisely a week before the day appointed for the wedding, as the soft lights, veiled by shades of ground glass, were just lighted in Dr. Wyllis' drawing-room, where Edith sat among her white roses and helitrope, working on a bit of cambric ruffling, and singing to herself. She was a slender, beautiful girl, with violet eyes, a blue veined forehead, and glossy, abundant curls of that pale gold that old painters love to portray.

'I wonder if Mortimer Palace is so very lovely,' she said to a silver-haired lady who sat opposite. 'Philip is going to take me there when we return from our wedding tour, aunty; he says it is the sweetest place a poet's fancy can devise, with fountains and shrubbery and delicious copses.—Oh, shall we not be happy there?'

She started up with a bright, sudden blush; for even while the words were trembling on her lips, Philip came into the room, his handsome face looking a little troubled, yet cheerful withal. Mrs. Wyllis, with an arch nod at her neice, disappeared into the perfumed perspective of the conservatory, leaving the lovers to themselves.

'You are looking grave, Philip,' said Edith, as he bent over and kissed her cheek.

'And I am feeling so, darling. I have a very unpleasant disclosure to make to-night—our marriage must be postponed indefinitely.'

'Philip, for what reason?'

'To enable me, by diligent labor at my profession, to realize sufficient means to support you, dearest, in a manner satisfactory to your father's expectations and my own wishes.'

'But, Philip, I thought——'

'You thought me the heir of Thomas Mortimer's wealth? So I was, Edith, a few hours since, but I have relinquished all claim to it now. When I accepted the bequest, I was under the impression that no living heir existed. I learned to-day that a distant cousin—a woman—is alive, although, my lawyer tells me, in ignorance of her relationship to Thomas Mortimer. Of course I shall transfer the property to her immediately.'

'But, Philip, the will has made it legally yours.'

'Legally, it has; but, Edith, could I reconcile it to my ideas of truth and honor, to avail myself of old Mortimer's fanciful freak at this woman's expense? I might take the hoarded wealth, but I should never respect myself again could I dream of legally defrauding the rightful heir. Nay, dearest, I may lose name and wealth, but I would rather die than suffer a single stain on my honor as a Christian gentleman!'

'You have done right, Philip,' said Edith, with sparkling eyes. 'We will wait, and hope on, happy in loving one another more dearly than ever.—But who is she! What is her name?'

'That's just what I didn't stop to inquire, I will write again to my lawyer to ask these questions, and to direct that a deed of conveyance be instantly made out; and then, darling—'

His lips quivered a moment—yet he manfully completed the bitter sentence—'Then I will begin the battle of life over again.'

And Edith's loving eyes told him what she thought of his noble self-abnegation—a sweet testimonial.

'Hem!' said Dr. Wyllis, polishing his eye glasses magisterially, with a silk crimson handkerchief; 'I didn't suppose the young fellow had so much stamina about him—a very honorable thing to do. Edith, I have never felt exactly right about Phil. Acre's being worthy of you before—'

'Papa!'

'But my mind is made up now.—When is he coming again?'

'This evening,' faltered Edith, the violet eyes softly drooping.

'Tell him, Edith, that he may have you next Wednesday, just the same as ever! And as for the law practicing—why there's time enough for that afterward. Child, don't strangle me with your kisses, keep them for Philip!'

He looked after his daughter with eyes strangely dim.

'Tried—and *not* found wanting!' he muttered indistinctly.

The perfume of orange blossoms had died away—the glimmer of pearls and satins were hidden in velvet caskets and traveling trunks, and Mr. and Mrs. Acre, old married people of a month's duration, were driving along a country road in the amber glow of a glorious June sunset.

'Hollo! which way is Thomas going?' said Philip, leaning from the window, as the carriage turned out of the main road.

'I told him the direction to take, Phil.,' said Edith, with bright, sparkling eyes. 'Let me have my own way just for once. We are going to our new home.'

'Are we?' said Phil., with a comical grimace. It is to be love in a cottage, I suppose?'

'Wait until you see, sir!' said Mrs. Acre, pursing her little rosebud of a mouth. And Philip waited duteously.

'Where are we?' he asked in astonishment, when the carriage drew up in front of a stately pillared portico, which seemed to be not unfamiliar to him. 'Surely this is Mortimer Palace!'

'I shouldn't be surprised if it was,' said Dr. Wyllis, emerging from the doorway.

'Walk in, my boy—come, Edith!—Well, how do you like your new home?'

'Our new home!' repeated Philip, 'I do not understand you, sir.'

'Why, I mean that your little wife yonder, is the sole surviving relative of Thomas Mortimer, although she never knew it till this morning. Her mother was old Mortimer's cousin, but some absurd quarrel had caused a total cessation of intercourse between the two branches of the family. I was aware of the facts all along, but I wasn't sorry to avail myself of the opportunity of seeing what kind of stuff you were made of, Phil. Acre! And now, as the deed of conveyance isn't made out yet, I don't suppose your lawyer need trouble himself about it. The heiress won't quarrel with you, I'll be bound.'

Phil. Acre's cheek flushed, and then grew pale with strong hidden emotion, as he looked at his fair wife, standing beside him, when the sunset turned her bright hair to coils of shining gold, and thought how unerringly the hand of Providence had straightened the tangled web of his destiny. Out of the darkness had come light.

A Town of Dwarfs.

A writer in the London *Times* describes the effect of excessive intermarriage on the inhabitants of Protes, a little town in the province of Santander, Spain. Until eighteen or nineteen years ago, the village was quite shut off from the rest of the world. Its inhabitants, from their ever-recurring intermarriages, had become a race of dwarfs. On market days the priests might be seen, with long black coats and high black hats, riding in to purchase the simple provision for the week'sconsumption—men of little intelligence and no learning, sprung from the lowest ranks. About eighteen years ago the Galician laborers, or Gallegos, from the mines of Galicia, swarmed into the town for lodgings, etc., and since their colonization the population has increased in strength, stature, education, intellect and morality. Their intellects, also have improved—intellects which had been stunted, dwarfed, and ruined by their frequent intermarriages.

A Pennsylvania clergyman seeing a young man standing in the doorway of the church, and looking hesitatingly about, paused in the midst of his sermon and exclaimed: 'Get out, young man, she is not here.'

Childhood's Faith.

From the Chicago Tribune.

The old adage, that 'Truth is stranger than fiction' received a striking and pathetic confirmation in our city, a few years ago. On the Friday before Christmas, there was delivered at the Post-Office a letter addressed to Mr. Santa Claus, Chicago, Ill. It was inclosed in a soiled yellow envelope, one end of which was torn open, while the triangular flap which should fold down upon the back was altogether gone leaving the written sheet partially disclosed and in a very insecured condition. The residence of Mr. Santa Claus being unknow to any of the Chicago mail-carriers, the letter was referred to the official who decides the fate of vagrant missives incompetent to declare or to reach their destination. Curiosity was excited by the singular appearance of the letter, and, it being quite open to inspection, it was removed from its scanty inclosure, and intelligence of its aim and errand sought in its contents. The epistle read as follows:

Mr. Santa Claus, Mama says that papa has been out of work so long that you will forget to come to our house, but Willie & Ruth will feel so bad that I thought I would write to tell you to come if you could. I am glad I learned to write at school, for if I had not I wouln'ot know how to get word to you we live at 58 Ambrose street, and my name is Anna McKenzie.

If you have any dolls left bring one to me and I will be so glad. ANNA.

I forgot to tell you that papa can't get any work and mama feels real bad because the money is most all gone and baby's shoes are worn out, wish I knew some of your little girls so I could see all the play things it would be so nice.

I could not find any other envelop.

There was a dewy moisture obscuring the sight of the official as he concluded the reading, and an impulsive movement of sympathy in the region where a manly heart was throbbing. The sweet faith and simplicity of the little child had pleaded for a hearing in artless accents that could not be resisted. The letter was submitted to the higher authorites in the Post-Office, producing upon each the same tender impression, and then a couple of gentlemen drove to 58 Ambrose street to verify the identity of Anna McKenzie. The story in the letter proved every word true, and little Anna was waiting in the confidence of a sublime belief for an answer. She exhibited no surprise at the visit of the gentlemen, regarding them as veritable messengers dispatched by the benign Kriss-Kringle. 'She had seen Santa Claus,' she said 'climbing up the lamp-post only the night before to see if they were good children and deserved any presents.'

The mother was taken completely by surprise, for Anna had kept in her own breast the secret of her appeal to the Saint whose blessed mission is to make the hearts of children happy at the anniversary of the infant Christ's advent in a lowly manger. Anna had found a stray bit of paper on which to write her message, and had picked up in the street an envelope with a printed address to the *'Herald and Presbyter*, Cincinnati.' This she had turned inside out in order to conceal the old superscription and find place for her own, but in the process had sadly mutilated the already worn covering. But it held together until she slipped it in the box on the lamp-post; and would not Santa Claus, in his illimitable wisdom and goodness, take care of all the rest? Nothing is more touching than the boundless trust of a child.

The gentlemen bore back to the Post-Office the information they had gained, and then the official who had first read Anna's letter went about among the employes of the institution, bearing the missive for perusal in one hand, and holding the other in a cup-shape for the receipt of the coins which might be donated toward the letter-writter's Christmas-box. The cup-shaped palm was brimming over before the official had finished his round, and, with some efforts made outside, a generous visit from Santa Claus was insured to the 6-year-old Anna. The coveted doll, one of the handsomest to be bought in the city, was procured for her, a toy watch and chain for wee Willie, and a pair of shoes for baby Ruth. Seventeen dollars in cash were contributed to the wasting pile of papa's money, which was "most all gone," and stockings, and shoes, and other essential articles were furnished by various firms whose interest had been enlisted.

The story here closes; but does it not make a warm, glad place in every reader's breast to know that the message sent out in the dark by baby-hands with a baby's freight of hope, without guide-mark or protection, should have reached the very goal it was dispatched to, and have accomplished its errand with ten-fold more success than was asked for? The incident is a rich one for believers in a loving Providence.

A Louisianian caught a democratic negro carrying off some of his fancy poultry the other night.

'What are you doing with my chickens!' he yelled.

'I was gwine to fetch 'em back boss. Dar's a nigger roun' here what's bin sputin' long'ith me 'bout dem chickuns. I said dey was Coaching Chyniz, and' he said dey wuz Alabama pullets, an' I was jes taken 'em roun' fer to 'stablish my nolledge. Dey don't lay no aigs, does dey, boss? Ef dey does, I'm mighty shamed of hustlin' uv 'em roun. Aigs is scase.'

An exchange says that a society has been formed in Siberia which compels all males to marry when of age, and makes the wife the head of the family and the husband a marked subordinate. There are a good many families in this commonwealth that are run on the Siberian plan.

An editor down east became martial and was made captain. On parade, instead of 'Two paces in front—advance,' he unconsciously exclaimed, 'Cash—two dollars a year in advance.' He was court-martialed and sentenced to read his own papers.

It needs no expounder of the Constitution to tell what utterance comes from a patriotic citizen of the United States, and what comes from a selfish and unpatriotic seeker after office.—Governor Hayes says: 'Whatever may be the result at which the lawful authorities arrive, you and I will quietly submit.' Governor Tilden says: 'I have secured a majority, and I propose to be inaugurated.'

English papers tell of a sea captain, recently arrived from Bombay, who saved his vessel during a hurricane of two days, by filling two canvas bags with oil, puncturing each slightly, and towing them astern. The oil spread slowly over the water. The huge waves spent their force at some distance, and around the ship was a large space of calm water.

Seene in a debating society: President—We will take the eyes and nose on the previous question.

Member—A word or two, Mr. President: Friends, Romans, countrymen! lend me your ears—

President—Order, sir! We will take the eyes and nose first.

'Why in the world don't you go to work!' inquired a citizen of a lazy fellow who was trying to borrow some money of him.

'Go to work!' echoed the man, 'how can I do anything till I know for certain who is going to be the next President?'

We are always glad of an opportunity to speak well of any act of the President, and take a particular pleasure in commending his determination not to interfere with the politics of Louisiana at this time.—*New York Herald.*

Captain Boynton recently accomplished the task of swimming down the river Po from Turin to Ferrara, a distance of eight hundred miles, in ninety-six hours, without a single stoppage.

A Nevada girl has discarded her lover because he refused to drink with her father—adding the cruel words: 'Ketch me a marryin' a man who can't stand a drink of whisky!'

The pure in heart are slow to credit calumnies, because they hardly comprehend what motives can be inducements to the alleged crimes.—*Jane Porter.*

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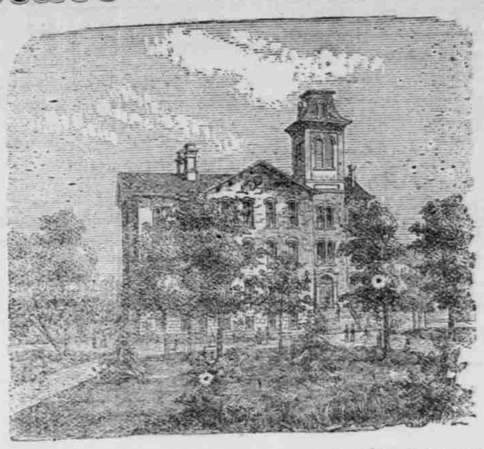

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