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OFFICIAL PAPER OF THE COUNTY.

A BOY'S LOVES.

"When I am big I will marry Kitty!"
But Kitty slapped me and ran away,
And while I wept for myself, in pity
I made up my mind I would marry May.

For May was gentle, and May was tender,
Yet lightly she put my offer by;
I am engaged to Georgie Bender;
Perhaps I'll take you if he should die."

By-and-by I met Jennie Blatchell;
Jennie was thirteen and I was ten;
I used to carry her books and satchel,
And made up my mind to marry Jen.

But Jennie, her reign was quickly over,
And Kate, my cousin, became my fate;
I said, "I'll propose, like a brave, true lover,
As soon as ever I graduate."

Alas! when I took out my clean diploma,
The darling girl was about to start
On her wedding trip with young Will De
Roma,
And no one knew of my broken heart!

At one-and-twenty again Love found me,
But the angel face and the meek blue eyes,
And the threads of the golden hair that loved me,
Went falling back into Paradise!

Hark! into the house Lu, Kate and Harry,
With shout and scamper from school have
come,
And a girl I never had meant to marry
Is wife and mother within my home.
—Mary Anne De Vere, in *Youth's Companion*.

STEP-MOTHER AND STEP-SON.

A Story of Love, Jealousy, Hatred, Revenge and Heroic Self-Sacrifice.

By the Author of "Dora Thorne," "A Bridge of Love," "At War With Herself," "A Golden Dream," "Which Loved Him Best?" "A Rose in Thorns," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II.

For many long years the Christmas-Eve party at Larchton Mere had been a most solemn institution. Sir Austen believed in old times and in old customs, and he loved Christmas with the simple love of a child. It was with a heart full of emotion that he took his place now at the table which groaned under its Christmas fare. To Ross it was something new to see a lady in the chair which had so long been vacant. Lady Cumnor's magnificent blonde beauty was shown to the greatest advantage to-night. She wore a dress of rich black velvet, with a suite of superb diamonds. Her arms and neck were white as the driven snow, her golden hair glistened in the brilliant light, and her face, proudly fair, had flushed with beautiful color. She had small white teeth that shone like pearls when she smiled, eyes as blue and clear and cold as the water of an Italian lake, and curved lips that could be sweet or scornful, as she pleased.

She was most fair and lovely; yet Ross, as he watched her with some curiosity, said to himself that she was not the kind of woman he could love. What was there about her that repelled him? Her fair, grand beauty and stately grace were perfect; but there was something that repelled him, something in the cold light of the blue eyes that chilled him. Stately grace, bland courtesy, refinement and tact distinguished her; but more than once he, watching her, caught a gleam in those blue eyes that was like a warning to him. In those cold, blue depths he, to whom nature had given keen shrewdness, read deep passions, ungoverned pride, great ambition, cool, calm power, and resistless force of will—all these he read where other people saw merely the bright light in the eyes of a beautiful woman.

She did not often glance at him; but when she did, there was calm determination in her eyes. From her his eyes wandered to his mother's distant relative, and they lingered long on that face. It lacked the brilliant beauty that distinguished Lady Cumnor's; but it had a loveliness of its own. The eyes were dark as night, clear, sweet, and with a wondrous steadfast light in their depths. Her face was oval in contour, Spanish in type—clear brunette beauty—with a color that at times assumed the hue of a delicate rose-leaf, and again was pale as a lily in the sunlight. Her dark hair was arranged in thick coils round a beautifully-shaped head; and the sparkling grace and life that characterize all Spanish women shone conspicuously in her. From the pale Spanish face, with its spiritual, poetical expression, Ross' eyes wandered to the fresh beauty of Lady Viola Carlien, an English girl, of whose nationality there could be no doubt.

Hers was a bright, beautiful face, a blending of lily and rose, with eyes of the color of a purple heartsease, and fair hair, which, without being golden, seemed to have caught the sunlight. She was as fresh and fair as a rosebud, straight and supple as a young willow, with an exquisite profile and a perfect figure. She wore a white dress with holly leaves and scarlet berries. Leam Dynevor had a dress of trailing black lace with golden leaves. Other fair faces were there; but these were the three that interested Ross Cumnor most.

Like all the dinners given at Larchton Mere, this was a grand success, and Sir Austen's face brightened as he looked first on the old friends round him, and then at his beautiful wife. He kept up the loving old custom of the wassail-bowl; and he stood up, with tears in his eyes and love and friendship warm in his heart, while he drank "A merry Christmas and a happy New Year!"

The whole party went into the brill-

iantly-lighted drawing-room, and then Lady Cumnor seemed to think it time that she spoke to her handsome step-son. She summoned him to her with a graceful wave of her fan; and Ross went.

"We have hardly spoken to each other yet," said Lady Cumnor. "I have not had an opportunity of saying anything to you. We were later than we expected to be in reaching home."

"It must have been a fatiguing journey for you," he said.

His voice was cold, and she felt it. The nearer he came to that cold, glittering beauty of hers the less he liked her. Yet she was a woman, and he was always chivalrous.

"It was not so very fatiguing," she replied; "and I had before my eyes always the hope of reaching home."

She laid great stress upon the last word, as though she wished to make him understand that Larchton Mere was her home quite as much as his. He felt this. He understood the position without one word, and passed it over. For his father's sake, and because she was a woman, he would do all he could.

"I hope," he said, "that you like Larchton Mere?"

"I have not seen much of it. The moon was shining brightly as we drove through the park; and the great mass of building lying in the shadow looked picturesque enough. I shall see more of it in the daylight to-morrow."

Ross gave one glance round the magnificent drawing-room. "Surely," he thought, "the interior might please her! She may have been accustomed to luxury; but this must please her."

"I hope," he said, "that you will be pleased with Larchton Mere. The house has always been considered a good one."

"It seems very fair," she replied, coldly. "Of course we shall require alterations; but that one expected."

"I do not quite see why," he said, stily.

"Do you not? How strange! Why, of course, when a house has been for twenty years without a lady at the head of it, there must of necessity be much to change and rearrange!"

The words stung him like the lash of a whip. Everything was just as his beautiful young mother had left it. His face darkened and his eyes flashed scornfully.

"I did not know that a lady was the head of a household," he said. "I thought it was the husband who was the head."

"That is a mistake you will have to rectify," she replied, with a little low laugh. "Place *aux dames* always."

How beautiful she was! Her hair shone like gold, and the diamonds flashed from amongst it. He almost wished as he looked at her that he could like her; but the coldness and the glitter repelled him.

"Have you many nice neighbors?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Ross. "I think we are very fortunate."

"Are these the best?" she asked; and there was perceptible on her face the faintest suspicion of scorn.

He took fire in a moment; he was loyal to the very core of his heart—his father's home-friends were all sacred to him.

"The best, most certainly, and far better than you would find as a rule. I have known them all from the time I was a child."

"I do not doubt it," she replied; and he asked himself what there was in her tone of voice that completely maddened him. It was neither satire nor insolence; yet there was a tinge of both in it.

She looked at him with a sudden gleam of laughter in her blue eyes.

"What am I to call you?" she asked.

"I did not know that I should find you a grown-up man. Sir Austen has always spoken to me of you as a boy."

"I shall always be a boy to him," said Ross.

"Yes, I fancy so," replied Lady Cumnor, with a peculiar smile. "What shall I call you—Ross, as Sir Austen does?"

"If you will, it will be best," he said; and his quick, ardent nature softened to her. Since his mother's death, so many years before, few women's lips had uttered his name, and the sound of it softened him.

"I cannot expect that you will call me 'mother,'" she remarked, with another soft, rippling laugh.

His face darkened again.

"I remember my own mother," he said; "and I could never give that name to another. I will call you 'Lady Cumnor,' if that pleases you."

"It matters little," she returned, indifferently. "The only thing to which I should seriously object is your calling me 'mother'—it would make me look so absurdly old. What do you think of your baby-brother, Ross?"

The handsome face softened into real beauty as he thought of the rosy-bud face and the tiny fingers. He would have spoken out his honest thoughts and have said something loving and kind about the child, but for a certain gleam of triumph he saw in her eyes, which he could not endure.

"I shall be better able to tell you when I have seen him again," he replied.

She seemed determined to pursue the subject.

"It must seem strange to you to have a brother," she said; "you have been quite a spoiled child."

"No; my father and I have been better friends and more confidential than the generality of fathers and sons; but I do not think he has spoiled me at all."

"You have been lord of Larchton Mere in his absence," she continued. "It will be difficult, I should imagine, to be a good subject when you have been reigning monarch."

He had no time to answer, for Mrs. Pitt came to beg that he would sing for them.

"Do you sing?" said Lady Cumnor, half scornfully.

"I will sing to you, Lady Viola," he said, as he passed her by; and Leam almost envied the words.

"In the greenest growth of the May-time
I rode where the woods were wet,
Between the dawn and the day-time—
The spring was glad that we met."

"I waited to watch you linger
With foot drawn back from the dew,
Till a sunbeam, straight like a finger,
Struck sharp through the leaves at you."

"And a bird overhead sang, 'Follow,'
And a bird to the right sang, 'Here,'
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear."

"I saw where the sun's hand pointed,
I knew what the bird's note said,
By the dawn and the dew-fall anointed,
You were Queen by the golden your head."

Even Lady Cumnor was silenced by the beauty of the song; and then Ross asked his young kinswoman if she would sing for them. She did so; but she wondered as she sang if he loved the girl who was "Queen by the gold on her head."

CHAPTER III.

It was a different voice this time that sounded through the room, low and rich, full of tears and veiled sighs—a voice that went straight to the heart. The words were clear and distinct, and Ross listened to them with rapt attention.

"Oh, the young love was sweet, dear,
That dainty dream of ours,
When we could not keep our feet, dear,
From dancing through the flowers—
When hopes and gay romances
Were thick as leaves in spring,
And cares were old folk's fancies,
And joy the solid thing!

"Of all youth's visions best, dear,
Of all its golden dreams,
Oh, the young love was best, dear,
That dainty dream of ours!"

When the song came to an end, there was silence for some few seconds—the greatest praise a singer can receive.

"Which song do you like best?" asked Lady Cumnor of Ross.

"They are both perfect in their way," he answered—"one song full of bright laughter, the other of smiles and tears. There can be no preference, because there is no comparison."

"What a fanciful name your kinswoman has," she said—"Leam Dynevor! I have never seen the name, except in 'The Atonement of Leam Dundas.' Sir Austen tells me it was Major Dynevor's wish; that he was born near the river Leam, and would have his child named after it."

"I like the name; it is pretty and uncommon. Looking at her to whom it belongs, I think that no other name could suit her so well. See how, as her thoughts change, the light changes, too, on her face."

Lady Cumnor laughed; and there was just a touch of scorn in her laugh, enough to send the proud blood hotly to his face. How dared she—this golden-haired, glittering woman—laugh at one who was related to his dead mother? He went from her; and, as he crossed the room, Lady Viola Carlien spoke to him.

"This is like the old Christmas Eves," she said. "Last year, when Sir Austen was from home, it seemed all a blank; now it is as though the world had suddenly awakened again." She looked fair and flushed as she toyed with her fan. She did not raise her eyes to his face as she went on.

"You have a new relative, Mr. Ross. What a sudden change from living alone here! All at once you seem to have quite a large household at the mere. Did you know anything of this cousin of yours before?"

"In a very remote fashion," he answered. "I knew that my mother had relatives in Spain; and in a very indefinite way I knew that one of them had married an English officer, who distinguished himself in the Carlist war; but I never heard much of them—Spain and England are so far apart."

"Do you like her?" asked Lady Viola; and again the beautiful eyes rested anywhere except on him.

"Yes. What a lovely Southern face it is—a face that suggests all beautiful ideas! I think of the moonlight and the dew as I look at her and her eyes. I have seen a color just like that in the deep waters of the Black Tarn. I am proud of my kinswoman."

The flush deepened in the flower-like face, and a spasm of something like pain passed over the smiling lips.

"You seem very ready to adopt her as a relative. What is she to you—really?"

"My mother and Leam Dynevor's mother were second cousins," he replied. "Leam would be a third or fourth cousin; not a very close relationship, is it?"

"No; and your father, Sir Austen, has really adopted her," she continued thoughtfully—"that is, she is to make her home here so long as she lives?"

"I should fancy so; though I have hardly seen my father, and we have not exchanged many words on the subject," she longed to say more. She raised her eyes to his face, and they spoke plainly as words. She longed from the depths of her frank, loving heart to say to him:

"Will you like her more than you do me, Ross? Will she take my place in your heart? Is she here, with her dark eyes and Southern face, to win the heart that I prize above all the world?"

She wished that he could have guessed her thoughts; but the words she uttered told naught of them.

"You will have many new friends now, Mr. Ross."

"They will not make me forget the old ones," he replied.

The girl's heart warmed to him. She saw in the future great changes for his beloved son who had hitherto been

master of Larchton Mere, whose will and sway had been undisputed. She was a good judge of character for one so young; and she saw that "my lady" would dispute his authority and his power inch by inch—that the proud, impetuous, noble heart would be tortured as only woman can torture, and that the gallant, brave young spirit would be stung and wounded. She saw and understood what the future life of Sir Austen's son must be if Sir Austen loved his wife; and she pitied Ross.

"Larchton will be quite a different place," she said, "with a lady at the head of the house"—and these words from her did not displease him in the least. "Will you like it as well, Mr. Ross?"

He looked at her thoughtfully.

"I cannot tell; but I think not," he replied. "My father and I were very happy together."

"Lady Cumnor is very beautiful."

"Yes; and my father seems devoted to her."

"Ah, Mr. Ross, there are the carol-singers! Hark, they are singing the old carol!"—and she looked at him with the light of expectation in her face. He had always taken her to the great western window, outside which the carol-singers stood; and they had listened to the carols together; but on this Christmas Eve he forgot the old custom.

"I must tell Miss Dynevor about the carol-singers," he said; and he left Lady Viola Carlien alone while he went to his kinswoman.

Leam stood talking to Sir Austen, who smiled as his son came up to them.

"Miss Dynevor," said Ross, "I want you to come with me and hear the carol-singers. Some of the carols they sing are beautiful; they are hundreds of years old."

"Ross," interposed Sir Austen, "as you and Leam are to be brother and sister, do not call her 'Miss Dynevor'; it is too formal. Give her her own bright name of 'Leam.'"

"I shall be only too happy if she will allow me. Leam, will you come with me and listen to the carol-singers? They form quite a picture standing out there in the snow."

The lovely Southern face was raised to his.

"I should like it very much," she said; and he noticed that her voice in speaking was as rich and sweet as in singing, full of sweet music that had a touch of sadness in it, as sweetest music always has.

They went to the western window together, and Lady Viola followed them with wistful eyes. Leam gave a low cry of delight when Ross drew aside the heavy velvet curtains. Outside lay the white snow, on which the moon was shining; the bare branches of the trees were fringed with snow, and in the midst of the snow-covered lawn was the group of men singing of the happy festival that gladdens every heart.

These two had never met before; yet already, before they had exchanged a hundred words, there was something between them that no words could explain. The heart of the girl was stirred as it had never been before. The kindly welcome of this handsome young kinsman, the kiss he had impressed on her face, the clasp of his hand and the music in his voice had awakened something in her heart of the presence of which she had hitherto been unaware. She could not have told how it was, but a subtle, sweet change had come into her life. To be here with him was like a glimpse of Paradise.

The spell was so strong, and it held her so wholly, that she did not care to break it, even by a word. She listened to him, and over her whole soul spread a glad content that she did not understand. The low cry that came from her lips was not all of delight at the scenery; yet that was fair enough. Her eyes lingered on the dark trees, the picturesque figures of the carol-singers, the pure white snow, and overhead, the glittering stars and the clear bright moon.

"You would not see a landscape like that out of England," she said. "How beautiful it is! It lies before us like a picture. I think all the glories of tropical lands, all the sunlit splendors, fade into insignificance before the white beauty and purity of the snow."

"Have you lived long in Spain, Leam?" he asked.

"No. I was there long enough to form a child's impression of a land splendid with flowers and sunlight. I have a vivid recollection of the colors of the flowers and the blue of the sky. When I dream of Spain it is always a vista of flowers and light. I came with my mother to England when my father died. I was only ten years old; and for the last eight years we lived here so happily, my mother and I."

"Then you are eighteen, Leam," he said, gently. "How sad to be motherless so young?"

"I never think myself motherless," she replied. "Perhaps you will say I am superstitious; people in the South are far more so than you colder, calmer Northerners. I am superstitious; for my mother, though dead, still lives for me. She is never out of my mind; and, whatever I do, my first thought is whether it will please her. If it be all an illusion I should not like it broken."

"I cannot tell whether it is or not," said Ross; "I have never thought much about such things, Leam. I should say—and I really do not know whether I am right or wrong—that any belief that made life purer and better was right; should not you?"

"That is too wide a question to discuss idly just now," replied Leam, smiling. "Ross, who is that beautiful Lady Viola Carlien?"

HUMOROUS.

—The Lowell *Citizen* has discovered that "L. S.," printed after the signatures on the blanks of legal documents means "Lick the Seal."

—"What is love?" asks an exchange. Love, my friend, is thinking that you each the girl can be an eternal picnic to each other.—*Salem Sunbeam*.

—"Fruit eaten at night is baneful." This is one of those wise axioms proved to be true by Adam. His trouble was caused by eating an apple after Eve.—*Boston Transcript*.

—"Thou rainest on my bosom," sang the Earth to the April showers. "Oh, dry up!" growled the Sun, as he shone out from behind the clouds. No music in his Sol.

—"We suppose that a great bore in good health can be called an artesian well. A man is seasonably dressed when he is clothed in a "pepper and salt" suit.—*Boston Courier*.

—"Several Bostoners recently got into a quarrel over a pie, and the littlest one felt less kindly toward the biggest, who took his part, than he did toward any of the others.—*Boston Post*.

—"Six months ago a middle-aged man, a former resident of Gosper Swamp, had to borrow money to buy a burro to go to Santa Carrina Mountains prospecting. He sold, the other day, a mine for \$10,000, and has better mines still for sale.—*Arizona Paper*. Six months ago a Chicago man had to borrow money to go to Leadville. He sent the other day for more money to come home with.—*Chicago Tribune*.

—"Jones says that there is one thing about which he and his wife can never agree. When he says a woman is homely, Mrs. J. always sees something interesting about her; and when he speaks of another as pretty, his helpmate will inevitably declare that she is positively ugly, or at least remark that she cannot for her part see where people's eyes are. Greater philosophers than Jones have pondered over this same problem during their whole lives, and died at last, leaving it unsolved.—*Boston Transcript*.

RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL.

—"The itinerant ministry of the Methodist Church received over 700 preachers during 1880.

—"Rev. G. W. Yancey, of Louisville, favors sensational sermons, for he says a sermon to be worth anything must be sensational.

—"The 5th of August has been set aside by the Methodists as a day of prayer especially designed to prosper their Ecumenical Conference.

—"The University of Des Moines, Ia., a Baptist institution, has been reorganized, there being an entire change of the faculty. David F. Call is the new President, and he will also discharge the duties of the Professor of Mathematics and Social Science.

—"In the midsummer term of the 'School of Philosophy,' at Concord, President Porter, of Yale, and President McCosh, of Princeton, will deliver lectures this year. Ralph Waldo Emerson has promised to read a paper on Carlyle, if his health will permit.

—"There are at present 6,379 schools in Austria without teachers. Over 4,780 places have been temporarily filled with individuals who have received no suitable training; and 1,596 schools had to be closed altogether, as even these untrained individuals are beginning to become scarce.

—"Brother Harrison, known as the 'boy preacher,' has concluded a revival season at Meriden, Conn., during which he has induced about one thousand one hundred persons to profess conversion. A book containing the life of this brother has recently been written by an evangelist named Davies, who says in his preface that he has submitted the pages to the young man in order to be certain as to the correctness of the statements made in them. These statements comprise some of the most wonderful religious exploits ever recorded.

Artemus Ward as a Boy.

Waterford, Me., is full of recollections of Charles Brown's boyish pranks, and his fellow-townsmen take pride in relating them, though time was when they caused not a little ominous shaking of the older heads, bringing forth repeatedly the prediction that he would never come to any good. One of his earliest exploits was the organizing of a circus—that moral institution dear to the heart of the small boy. Dressed in one of his mother's gowns, his head ornamented with her best bonnet, the future "genial showman" acted as clown, ring-master and manager-in-chief, with his village cronies as assistants. His father's red cow, covered with blankets and provided with a stuffed coat-sleeve for a trunk, served as the elephant, and by long and careful training was brought into the ways of all circus trick-mule. The occasion of all others was the initiating of some country greenhorn into the mysteries of the "show business," by permitting him to ride the elephant. When such a youth was found and brought in, he was placed on the back of the animal with great ceremony, to be as surely tossed "sky high." Upon this, Charles would express the greatest surprise that the elephant should act so, and would commiserate the poor victim with much concern. (Charles continued all his life a friend and patron of the circus.)—*Scribner's Monthly*.

—"Prof. Grimmer says that within the next ten years this country is to lose 15,000,000 inhabitants by epidemic.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]