

## THE ADVERTISER.

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### PATTY'S SONG.

Let the winds quarrel in mid-air together;  
Let the rain deluge the country and town;  
Here in my heart is the sunniest weather,  
Whether the sky have a smile or a frown.  
What if the tempest in anger be calling?  
What if the dim clouds have hidden the sun?  
What if the rain in a torrent be falling?—  
Charley has wood me, and Charley has won.

What do I care for the lilies or daisies,  
Whether they burgeon, or whether they blow?  
While my heart voices in music his praises,  
Little of blossoms I care or I know.  
Fairies is but a name that the roses  
Brighten his name than the rays of the sun:  
Quick at his voice my heart's portal uncloses—  
Charley has wood me, and Charley has won.

Earth has grown fairer the air has grown sweeter,  
Ever since Charley his passion confessed:  
All that he said of his financial metier,  
What he does is the wisest and best.  
Flows to his soul all my love and devotion,  
As to the ocean the swift rivers run:  
Joy thrills my heart to its core with emotion—  
Charley has wood me, and Charley has won.

—Thomas Dunn English.

### 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 Dawn," "Which Loved His Best," "A Rose in Thorns," &c., &c.

CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

The girl's face flushed as his hands touched the ripples of dark hair. He parted it so as to show the pretty little ears that were like pink shells. He certainly took more time than was required for the office. Either the rose was the most stubborn of roses or the hair the most tiresome of hair. The touch of his hand was like a caress, and the beautiful head drooped with the shy grace of a child. It seemed to her quite unnecessary that he should hold the heavy braids of her hair in his hand so long—and yet she was spell-bound.

"That is perfect," he said at length, with a deep sigh. "You ought always to live in Spain and wear roses, Leam. You are matchless!"

Then a sudden stir near him recalled Lady Viola to his mind. He left Leam with an effort and went up to her.

"Now, Lady Viola," he said.

"Are you sure, Mr. Ross, that you are quite at liberty, and that you have leisure to attend to me?" she asked. But the sarcasm was lost on him.

"Yes, quite," he said. "How beautiful Leam looks with that crimson rose in her dark hair! Now let me find something for you. Ah, I see some little! Nothing could be better! I will get you some."

He returned in a few minutes with the flowers in his hand.

"These will suit you *a ravir*, Lady Viola," he said. "The white, snowy leaves will contrast well with the gold of your hair."

But her heart sank within her. He had spent several minutes in arranging the red rose in Leam's dark hair; but he made no offer to place the lilies in hers. He put them into her hands and smiled with a kindly, honest smile into her face.

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Ross?" she asked, a few minutes later, when Leam stood by her side.

"I was thinking," he answered, slowly, "that as you stood there together you were each perfect in your different ways. I was wondering which an artist would prefer—the dark head with the crimson rose, or the golden head with the lilies; and I could not decide."

"That is a terrible confession to make," laughed Leam; "but the comfort of it is, neither of us can be jealous!"

The little dance—as Lady Cumnor persisted in calling it—was a great success. They all enjoyed it very much; but, long before the evening was over, Lady Viola saw that Ross had given the whole passionate love of his heart to beautiful Leam Dynevor, although he himself hardly knew it. Lady Viola was not one to bear malice. She was generous enough to admit that it was no fault of Leam's. Her faultless beauty and grace, her dark, bewitching eyes and face so full of passion and poetry, would have lured away the heart of any man. Lady Viola sighed as she thought of it all.

"I am only twenty," she said to herself. "They say that the women of our family are all long-lived. I may live for forty years longer; but, long as I may live, there will never again creep into my life one gleam of sunlight or one hope of happiness—never again! Of what use is it that my hair is like gold and my eyes like the color of a heartsease, as these men say? They have done no good for me. The only love I care to win has been won from me in one brief hour, and is given for ever!"

She made her escape from the ball-room; and, leaving her partner to look for her in despair, she went to the blue drawing-room. She had a strange desire to kneel at the window and look at the silvery mere. That would comfort her, she felt, and she could say a long farewell to the spot she loved so well, and where she had once dreamed her life might be spent. There was no trace of resentment in her heart, no anger, but some little wonder that Ross had been so easily won, and that her

beauty had been less than nothing to him.

The blue drawing-room was not lighted; it was not near the suite of reception-rooms that were used for the dance. The moon poured in a flood of silvery light which gave to everything a weird, ghastly effect. It did not daunt Lady Viola; she liked the thought of being alone in the moonlight, where she could do battle with her feelings. She sat down by the great window, her hair like a crown with the snowy lilies in its golden depths, her fair sweet face with its radiance dimmed, and tears trembling on her eyelashes. So she sat watching the mere, and thinking how many happy hours she had spent on the water—hours that could never come again.

It was all over now, the sweet dream of her life. She would go away from Larchton Mere on the morrow, she said to herself, and she would never return until Ross was married and her dream ended. The pale, sweet face was bent over the white, jeweled hands, and hot tears rained through the slender fingers; it was the familiar burden of the old song—"Oh, love, my love, had you but loved me!"—it was the old story of the love of a woman's heart given lavishly, but in vain.

As she sat there a shadow was cast by the moonlight, the breath of odorous roses came to her, and a kindly hand was laid on her bowed head.

"Lady Viola," said Ross, "what are you doing here all alone and in the darkness? Let me ring for lights."

"Oh, no, pray do not!" she cried. She was terrified lest, finding the traces of tears on her face, he should want to know why they were there.

"I have been looking for you," he said. "I noticed half an hour ago that, although the lilies in your hair were living and fair, those you carried in your hands were dead."

Yes, they were dead, she thought; and they were not the only sweet, bright things that had died since night fell over land and sea. Ross went on:

"Since I saw that, I have been looking for you, Lady Viola. I went to the gardener and begged these few red roses. I have given some to Leam—see how sweet they are!"

She buried her face, still wet with tears, in the leaves of the sweet roses. Ross continued:

"Perkins was quite unwilling to give them to me. I had to say they were for you."

"It was very good of him," she said, without raising her head.

"Lady Viola, tell me why you are here. Are you tired? I cannot understand the belle of the ball flying from the homage of her admirers to solitude and semi-darkness. I must be mistaken; but I could imagine there were tears in your voice. Are you in trouble about anything, Viola?"

"No," she replied—"not exactly in trouble; but I am sorry to leave Larchton Mere. You are all so kind to me here. I feel so much at home, and so happy."

"We shall all be sorry to lose you, Viola," he said.

Then from the distant dancing-room came the sweet sad notes of "*Mon Reve*." A shudder came over her as she heard it. What had life been to her but a dream—sweet and sad as the music, and just as soon over?

"I will say good-by to him now," she thought. "If my heart has to die, let it die to-night—why should it live on? I will go away to-morrow, and I will not see him again."

She loved him so well that, but for the pride of her maidenhood, she could have told him all about it, and why the tears were on her face.

"I am sorry to know that you are sad, Viola," said Ross; "but you will come back again soon. We must ask Mrs. Pitt to come in the spring."

"Never again," thought Lady Viola—"never again, to suffer what I have suffered!" then, aloud, "No; that is what makes me sad. I do not see how I can return. I shall not be surprised if we go abroad in the spring, and you—will have plans of your own, Ross."

"I do not know, Viola."

"Ah, yes, you will!"—and from the pain and pathos in her voice he might have guessed what was wrong. "You will find this year bring many changes, Mr. Ross—nothing will ever be the same again."

Her heart grew heavy as she thought of Leam Dynevor; while through his passed a thrill of delight. Who, indeed, could say what this year would bring—the happy new year that had not long dawned?

"I do not know," she continued, "when I shall see Larchton Mere again, and I am sad at leaving it."

"So am I sorry that you are going," he replied; and again the beautiful music of "*Mon Reve*" came to them. "You will take with you all our thoughts and affection," he added. "Even Lady Cumnor loves you, Viola."

"Yes, I go," she said, sadly; "and I leave happy Leam behind."

Still the meaning of her words did not occur to Ross; that she should call Leam happy because he loved her never struck him.

"How I shall remember this night!" said Lady Viola. "The white moonlight on the mere, the silvery light and the shadows in this room, the odor of roses, and the music of "*Mon Reve*." No matter where I go, I shall take the memory of it with me.

"I shall never again be friends with roses: I shall lose the sweet tones when a note is strong."

Relents and recoils and climbs and closes, As a wave of the sea turned back with song."

I shall hate sweet music my whole life long."

She said the words rather to herself than to him. He heard them, and believed that her sadness was all owing to her dislike to leave the mere. How

should he comfort her? What could he say? If he had known the passionate love repressed, the deep despair beaten back, his heart would have been stirred.

She must say something of Leam; she must mention her name; she must know if her ideas were right or wrong; she must know whether she was giving up too soon.

"Will Leam be here always?" she asked, gently.

"I suppose so," he replied. "She will if it depends on me. But I have not much authority now; have I, Viola?"

"You seem very much attached to her," she said; and then she shuddered.

It was all over now, the sweet dream of her life. She would go away from Larchton Mere on the morrow, she said to herself, and she would never return until Ross was married and her dream ended.

The pale, sweet face was bent over the white, jeweled hands, and hot tears rained through the slender fingers; it was the familiar burden of the old song—"Oh, love, my love, had you but loved me!"—it was the old story of the love of a woman's heart given lavishly, but in vain.

It was all over now, the sweet dream of her life. She would go away from Larchton Mere on the morrow, she said to herself, and she would never return until Ross was married and her dream ended.

She had done the deed now. She had thrown down the gauntlet, and her life hung on his next words. Her face had grown paler, and the red roses trembled in her hands.

He was in no hurry to speak; but it was not from want of words. At last he said:

"Viola, no man can set to music the whisper of the wind in the trees, the murmur of the waves, the breath of the summer wind over the light grass; yet that would be easier than for me to tell you what I think of Leam."

Then in silence she laid down the hope of her life at his feet; in silence she bade farewell to the light which had brightened and sweetened her existence. A voiceless prayer rose from her heart to Heaven; and then she drew nearer to him.

"I understand," she said, simply. "Heaven bless you, my dear! If you think of this night in the coming years, it is the sound of that sweet music or the breath of the red roses brings it back to you, you will always remember that I quite understood, and that I prayed to Heaven to bless you."

"My dearest Viola, of course I shall remember. We have always been the dearest of friends."

The tears fell unheeded now, and she echoed in a broken voice:

"Yes, always the dearest of friends, Ross, always. I shall consider this our farewell, Ross. To-morrow we shall have but little time to see each other. This is our real good by."

At other times he had kissed her face; but now he bent forward and with his lips touched the lilies in her hair. And again she felt that he had given all the love of his life to Leam Dynevor.

Lady Viola left the next morning with a smile on her face, and no one knew the wound that rankled in her heart.

#### CHAPTER VI.

The spring of the year had come round; but home was no longer home to Ross Cumnor. In vain had he tried to stem the torrent that was gradually sweeping him from all place and position. As the baby-boy, Hugh, grew stronger day after day, Lady Cumnor grew more insolent, more urgent that Ross should leave home, and more anxious that her son should be at least heir of Larchton Mere.

Good-natured, kindly, indolent Sir Austen never dreamed why she questioned him so closely about his title, lands and money; he was the last ever to suspect evil in any one. So, when he stood one morning on the terrace overlooking the mere, and she came up to him, he never imagined that that was the first of a series of investigations and suggestions that were to end in driving his elder son from home and making his younger son heir to Larchton Mere. Lady Cumnor went up to him with the haughty grace that was peculiar to her and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Are you looking over your broad lands, Austen?" she said. "They are a goodly inheritance."

Her ladyship's voice and touch always soothed him, and he was almost powerless in her hands. He could never resist her; he had neither the will nor the energy. It would have been amusing had it not been pitiful to see how completely she managed him; how skillfully she brought him round to her way of thinking; while he thought that he was very firm in carrying out his own ideas. On this fair spring day, she made her first attack against the dead Spanish wife and her dark-haired son. The white hand touched him more caressingly.

"What a grand prospect, Austen! There are larger estates than Larchton Mere, but none more perfect. We have every variety of landscape. You must feel proud, Austen, at being lord of such a domain."

"I do not know, my dear," replied Sir Austen. "I have never felt any particular pride about it. But I love the mere."

Her face darkened, and her blue eyes were shadowed as she listened.

"I should have been proud if it had been mine," she said.

"But, Hester, how can I be proud of that which Heaven has given for no merit of my own? I could be proud of genius or talent, but not of wealth that has come to me from my father, wealth in the gaining of which I had no share. I often think if I had made a fortune by my own industry I might have been proud of it, but I could not be proud of one that was placed in my hand at my birth."

"Your ideas are very good, doubtless," said Lady Cumnor, "but they differ from mine. How strange it seems that such a grand property as this is not entailed, Austen!"

"Yes, I have often thought so," he replied; "but there has never been a question with respect to it."

"Has it always descended from father to eldest son?" she asked; and her lips paled as she spoke.

"No, not always. It has gone from brother to brother. Sometimes even it has gone from a father to a younger son, when the elder has preferred, perhaps, a military life or the life of a traveler. There has never been any dispute about it."

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"I think," said her ladyship, slowly, "that the law of entail is one of the most absurd in the world."

On hearing one of the articles of his faith so strongly attacked, Sir Austen grew grave and serious.

"Why, Hester—why do you say that?" he asked.

"I call it a mere relic of a barbarous age," she said.

And again he repeated:

"Why, Hester—why?"

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