

THEIR GOLDEN WEDDING

BY ZOE ANDERSON NORRIS

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The room, in spite of its poverty, wore a gala air of subdued expectancy. The hearth was swept and garnished; the rug in front of the fire lay without a crease, the frayed fringe spread flatly out.

The rag carpet, woven of innumerable old dresses of various hues and patterns, showed signs of having been recently sprinkled with handfuls of salt and carefully cleaned with the newest of brooms; the lace curtains, darned and redarned, hung evenly to the floor in permanent, starched folds, and on the table in front of the lamp, whose shade was a faded remnant of a violet in a white dress which had been left over from a party given last past. A diamond ring, the neck in the neck in the diamond clock.

of that cut glass shone like diamonds. Whatever became of those beautiful things? I never see any of them about."

Mary left her chair and, going over to the table, took up the little wine-glass filled with violets.

"It all went in the sale," she said—"all but this," holding it up to the light, "and this is nickel."

"She set it down in such a position that the violets might nod straight at the old man, waiting him the sweetest perfume, and, resuming her seat, again spread out her worn, but still skirts and assumed her companion's mien, awaiting her guests."

"The sale?" he repeated. "If so, as to me everything we had was in that sale. It was a wonder that anything didn't take the cloth off our backs. They came near it."

"Some of them are dead, but many of them are alive, though dead to me. They don't know any more than we are poor."

"Yes, yes," he assented, "it is a sad thing to be poor. I don't think I could do anything but weep. I don't think I could do anything but weep."

"It is a so long as it is," he asked cheerfully. "I don't think I could do anything but weep."

"I don't think I could do anything but weep," he said. "I don't think I could do anything but weep."

"It is that they were here, then, if they are coming," she interrupted, and with that she went to the window, drew aside the curtain and looked out.

"It is a bad night," she said. "The snow is beginning to fall again. That may keep some of them away, but not all."

The clock struck 8. It struck viciously. The noise disturbed the cat. She stretched herself full length, her claws showing, rolled over on her other side, curled up in a fluffy ball, then dropped off to sleep once more, her face upturned.

There were voices outside. Two people under an umbrella, upon which the snow fell in large flakes, hurriedly approached the house.

"You'd better go to the door, Mary," said the old man, who was also listening, though he pretended not to be, "and take the little brush broom with you to brush the snow off their clothing."

She turned disconsolately away from the window.

"They have gone by," she said. "He set himself to comfort her. 'Never mind, it is early yet,' he reminded her. 'It is only half past 8. Nowadays people don't come to parties until nearly 9, they tell me. It is different from what it was when we were young.'

"Our crystal wedding wasn't so very long ago," said she, "and they came early enough to that." She looked back over her shoulder through the window at the shining walk, along which couples passed, laughing and talking to

gether, their wet umbrellas bobbing up and down. "But we were rich then," she added, with a sigh.

The clock pointed to "nearly 9." Mary sat in her rocking chair once more, listening. At every footstep she raised her head, her eyes brightening with hope behind the gold rims of her old spectacles. As they passed by her head drooped again and her eyes fixed themselves upon the flames, whose flicker drew out the amber lights from her tortoise shell comb and the left over yellow in her hair which in her young days had been golden.

The old man dozed. Now and then his head bent upon his breast, raised itself with a sudden jerk and drooped again.

He sat thus for a long time, nodding. By and by he grasped the handles of his arm-chair and slowly rose, bowing courteously to the right and to the left. "They are beautiful, these presents," he said unctuously. "They glisten like diamonds. They quite dazzle me, I thank you, I thank you."

His wife had also risen, watching him wonderingly. She went to him and took him by the arm, gently pushing him back into his chair.

"Sit down, Richard," she commanded. "You have been asleep. You are talking now in your sleep. Were you dreaming of our crystal wedding and the beautiful presents they brought us—presents we didn't need, because we had plenty then? This is not our crystal wedding. This is our golden wedding."

He blinked his dim eyes open. "And isn't the house full of people?" he asked her. "Haven't they come, these good friends of ours, bringing us presents, handsome, shining presents, armfuls of them? I thought I saw them."

"No," she answered bitterly. "We are no longer rich. It is years since our crystal wedding, and we have descended in the scale of fortune. This is our golden wedding, and we are old and



"WE HAVE EACH OTHER."

poor. I have been sitting here watching and waiting and listening for you, John."

"I saw him this afternoon," the old man explained quietly. "It was one of the children, Sally. She was a little sleepy last night and needed watching. He said maybe he couldn't come on that account. I didn't tell you before, because I thought there would be so many others who wouldn't miss him."

The clock pointed to 10. It had begun to rattle wheezily, getting ready to strike.

The wife went out into the dining room, where the plates for the guests were piled one above the other, the napkins beside them, the frosted cakes, with the cake knives lying ready to hand.

She set the plates on the polished old sideboard, laid the napkins in a drawer and covered the cakes with a cloth to keep away the mice.

Then she walked softly back into the room. The hem of her dress touched the cat. She got up, moved lazily to the other corner of the rug and lay down there out of the way, while her mistress drew the curtains and passed into the hall to lock the front door.

She stood there in the hall a moment, listening. Somebody was coming! Late, it was true, but coming at last. They were not entirely friendless then. She heard the steps drawing nearer and nearer. They went on by, echoing more and more faintly along the pavement, until the sound of them passed entirely away.

She locked the door, re-entered the room and stood close to the old man, running her loving fingers through his frosty hair.

"We are old and friendless and poor, Richard," she said in her thin, trembling voice, "but we have each other."

"Yes, yes," he murmured, drawing one of her hands down and holding it tenderly between his own; "we have each other."

FINALE OF THE BOER WAR! Lourenzo Marquez Correspondent Says Strife is Completely Ended.

London, Sept. 25.—"The war is completely ended," says the Lourenzo Marquez correspondent of the Daily Telegraph.

"Many guns have been destroyed and hundreds of wagons and thousands of tons of stores of every kind have been burned. Wreckage of every kind lies in every direction in the Hectorspruit region.

"A good police force of 20,000 men can effect the complete pacification of the country. It will be impossible for the Boers in the future to mass a force exceeding 1,500. They are sick of the war and the Irish, American and other mercenaries are clamoring for payment and threatening the Boer officials."

Alarming News From China. Berlin, Sept. 25.—Alarming news from China has reached the German government, but it will not be published now, as Germany intends to use it during the conferences in Peking. Field Marshal von Waldersee has called Emperor William direct that he has found the general situation much more dangerous than he had expected, as it has grown worse during the last fortnight, and the consuls in central and southern China are expecting a general uprising.

London, Sept. 25.—The Daily Mail has the following dispatch from Lourenzo Marquez: "Heavy fighting is reported across the Sabi river. This means that the British are intercepting Steyn and Reitz, who, with their forces, are attempting to push northward and to effect a junction. A commando is said to be surrounded near Pietersburg."

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