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THE PRETTY TOLL-GATE KEEPER.

Down a valley fresh and fragrant, where a lake of silver shines embosomed in broad meadows of the deepest, purest green.

Some travelers go there daily—some to talk and some to trade.

Some with baskets, some with wagons—man and mule and horse and mule.

But whoever makes the journey is compelled, each time, to pay toll.

Long enough to drop some pennies at the tollman's rustic table.

Who takes them to his daughter; sixteen years, I heard her say.

With her pretty face in smiles, and her soft curls drooping down.

On her shoulder, that I think of her the whole long way to town.

I have business at the village every work-day week.

And the reason why I go there is not very far to seek.

I might take a shower by way, and see just how much of the world's good things I can get.

But I find this tender softness of her white and peevish hand.

I am never in a hurry if she makes me stand and wait.

While I linger, half a dozen may have sauntered through the gate.

But when my eye and finger touch her fingers well equipped.

What sharp electric tremor tingles through my heart and head!

Yesterday I passed much longer than was needful to pay toll.

One by one I dropped the pennies from my fingers and counted.

One by one the tollman's dame across her simple dress.

And, amidst the rustle of confusion, I aroused my heart to speak.

"It was but a simple question—four short words and nothing more."

But I put the matter frankly in the good old-fashioned way.

Then her face grew sweet and sober, and her blue eyes seemed to speak.

That I caught at once the meaning of her lips moved to speak.

Let the busy crowd chatter—I will give them no heed.

For I had paid my toll when I reach the rustic table.

SAVED BY SIGNS.

"What an odd whim it is of yours to employ a tutor!"

"Blanche," cried her elegant but rather flippant friend, Mrs. Percy Waltham.

"Do allow me to warn you against what I can not help but deplore in a girl of your position."

"It is a touch of humanity in your case, to begin with," returned Blanche, quietly.

"I employed her aunt as a seamstress first, and the poor woman, seeing suddenly, of her comparative stranger, provided for."

"I took her home and found her a good and useful girl, who has made herself in one year really indispensable to me."

"But the idea of your learning the language of signs, and learning to make those odd motions of your hands?"

"My dear, how can you do it? How can you take so much trouble and bore yourself just for the sake of a—no body?"

"I am sometimes very glad to find something that interests me," said Blanche, seriously.

"It is a dreadful confession for me to make, but I confess that I am not yet twenty-one, but I must tell the truth, and say that at times I am heartily tired of my idle life!"

"Idle!" replied Mrs. Waltham, with a little scorn.

"My dear child, how can you be idle with a visiting list like yours, and a long array of invitations, that keep you going all the while the season lasts, not to mention dresses."

"At this very moment I expect a bill from Paris that will occupy me, in the mere trying on, nearly all day to-morrow; yet I've promised to drive out, to go to the opera, and to be at home, and to be at Mrs. Harrington's dance."

"Yes, I know," Blanche said, a little wearily.

"But one does not think about those things all the time—at least I do not. I have a great deal to do, and I am not at all idle."

Mrs. Percy Waltham shrugged her pretty shoulders, and arched her delicate brows in silent protest against the absurdity, then, imploring "her darling" not to become that dreadful thing, "a character."

"The gray queen of fashion does not look lightly on the edges of the cheek, gathering up her draperies, and fluttered away to her carriage, like any other gorgeous butterfly of a season."

Blanche followed her departure with a bit of sighing, she moved unasily about the room, till having caught sight of her own perturbed spirit in a mirror, she stood still and tried to reason against her growing disquiet and loss of spirits.

Young, rich and an acknowledged beauty, she could scarcely form a wish without the means of its gratification; and yet, as she was just thinking, there was nearly a year in every prospect, when she was happy—the rest of her time was spent in longings she could not define, and regrets she strove in vain to combat.

best its upward, onward course! How gladly she would have met poverty, if only she could have the wealth that accompanied it in her life!

It was while in his society the happy hours passed that made all time bloom with gladness; and even when she was always present, during her lessons, seemed to enjoy the days set apart for them, and long for their coming.

Genie, devoted little creature that she was, never did waiting-maid ever so adore the young mistress she served as pretty Zoe did.

Perhaps it was this devotion, apparent in every glance of her soft, yet intelligent eyes, that made the little maid so great a favorite with Mr. Guy, the tutor, who, for the sake of being able to converse with her—see perhaps, in his turn, to be instructed by her in the use of the French language, and so became one of the trio of silent talkers; for, owing to her native refinement, and grace Zoe was more of a companion than a servant.

Time flew—so swiftly for Blanche since it brought a day nearer and nearer that she had learned to dread, and over her betrothed neither came nor sent tidings of his going.

They had met only as children; he was five years her senior, and had gone abroad to continue his studies; she was too young to think or care much about it.

Later he had written to her at long intervals, and with cold ceremony; but as no answer appeared necessary, they had never progressed to correspondence.

"But now it is absolutely due to me, as a lady that she should write," she thought, as the time was close at hand.

"To-night my faith forever to a man who has no more to do with me, and who shocks me, it is outrageous to every thought and feeling, and I will appeal from my dead father to my living guardian against such an ordeal."

And, amidst the rustle of confusion, I aroused my heart to speak.

"If he would only come, or write—anything to rouse me to desperation," she said, in a low voice, as if to protest against her own thoughtless, a word, "Woe!"

"She repeated the word with a flush of pain. "No, no! there is no soothing necessary. Donald Irving would not receive me, as I am an inheritance to him—nothing more."

Then her mind reverted to Norman Guy, the poor tutor, and a frenzied desire to see him, and to hear him, and to see that she could only be permitted to follow the hard and toilsome fortune of the humble scholar, took possession of her.

But only for a moment; the recollection of the tutor's silence recalled her to herself. Her cheeks flushed painfully as the undeniable consciousness of having bestowed her heart unsought, and to a man who was a comparative stranger, forced itself on her.

"What a lot was hers! To the world it seemed most enviable, but to her it was full of untold bitterness."

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ill and ease. Congratulating her in a few hurried words on coming into possession of such rare gems, he took a hasty leave.

Turning from the jewels, that lay open on her dressing-table, Blanche flung herself into an easy-chair and gave vent to a deep sigh.

The wedding was to be entirely private. His preparations she had spared herself by giving an order to competent parties to furnish all that was expected to belong to the outfit of a young lady in her position, consequently her rooms were full of unopened boxes, packages and packing-cases, the contents of which Mrs. Waltham, to quote her own words, was just dying to inspect, but which as yet had no interest for their fair owner.

She entered, by and by, to announce dinner, from which her guardian excluded her on account of the agitation she had undergone that morning.

Poor Mr. Irving! An excellent gentleman and a capital man of business, he had exhibited the error of confining to private life on finding himself possessed of a princely fortune; for, owing to the lack of his former business assistant, he had become a confirmed monomaniac on the subject of wealth, and now passed his time in imagining himself ill of all manner of diseases.

Blanche lingered long in the drawing-room, gazing out into the twilight street, through which carriages were seen to be hurrying on their way home-ward. She had ordered tea in her own room, and presently ascended the staircase, which she shot up into a room, as if she were in a hurry.

"Dear little Zoe!" said Blanche, as she sat alone together. "How little I did think, in learning her silent language, and with my father's permission, I have wooed you in another character; but, thanks to his taste in long names, not under a false title. My full name is Elizabeth Mary, and my maiden name is Norman."

"And I shall always call you Norman!" cried happy Blanche, in a tone so replete with joyous content as to tell her whole heart's story.

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them in her own circle till the echo reached a much lower one, it seems."

But how changed the tutor's manner! How much at home he seemed! How the servants obeyed him, and Zoe smiled, though the poor little soul was pale and trembled under the late danger of her darling mistress!

Blanche pressed her hand over her beating heart, and looked from one to the other.

"Forgive me, Blanche, if I have enjoyed your society in the full of a life, and learned to know and love my future wife as I never could have done in my own character," Norman said, hurriedly, with his eyes full of tears.

"I implore your forgiveness for the plan that grew out of your evident aversion to me in person, since you never named me in your society."

"I am sorry to hear that you are a teacher, and your readiness to absorb your mind in study to distract it from our approaching union—in fact, all that proved your horror of marrying a man you did not love."

"Do not consider that I shudder, Norman, at all that I have done, but at the full face threatening me. Nor can I ever forget that I was saved by signs."

—Saturday Night.

An Immoral Speculation.

For the results of ordinary speculations the public at large cares very little. It is only in the case of those who are worsted in the battle over this or that stock is rightly considered to concern chiefly the "bulls" and the "bears" themselves.

But when the speculation is of a more serious nature, and involves the life, like breadstuffs or cotton; when speculators succeed in locking up the surplus products and creating an artificial famine in the midst of plenty; when they succeed in hoarding up the necessities of life, and forcing the price of them to a point where the necessities of life are hard to distinguish from a crime, and there is reason for rejoicing when a movement of this kind fails, and the surplus is again put into circulation.

Such a case is now before the public. It is a speculation in the necessities of life, and involves the life, like breadstuffs or cotton; when speculators succeed in locking up the surplus products and creating an artificial famine in the midst of plenty; when they succeed in hoarding up the necessities of life, and forcing the price of them to a point where the necessities of life are hard to distinguish from a crime, and there is reason for rejoicing when a movement of this kind fails, and the surplus is again put into circulation.

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