

Story of Arabelle Loring: Aetat. 18

A Tale Told by Letters.

By Helen Streeter

The firelight lit up the old bachelor's face with a ruddy glow. It flickered over his powdered hair and the carved oak of his chair, breaking into subdued sparkles as it met the diamonds on his fingers and the silver buckles on his shoes, and touching the snow of his rich lace ruffles with its rosy light. It was not bright enough to show the fine lines about the old bachelor's mouth and eyes, and the thin hands that might have trembled were clinched upon the arms of his chair. The blaze lent a tint of health to his pale cheek, and danced in his dark eyes. The firelight was making the old bachelor young again.

By his side stood a spindle-legged table, holding a slender goblet of Venetian glass, and a decanter, whose ruby contents showed well against the dusky background of the room. Beside these lay a packet and a letter.

The old bachelor poured himself a glass of burgundy, and his fingers trembled a bit as he held it up to the light.

"Old," he said, "as old as I, which signifies nigh unto that three score and ten, which the good book tells us is enough. For me, I say not so. Wine and men, methinks, grow better with old age. Old books, old wine, old friends, and of those last, none better than Harry Loring, gone to rest a sennight since. Here's to you, comrade—a better never cracked a bottle for good fellowship! And now, to read thy letter, Hal. What couldst thou have to say to me which only thou couldst tell when the grave had hid thee from mine eyes?"

Unto Richard Oakley, Esquire, at his place of Oakley Grange, in the village of Oakley, in the county of York, by the hand of my trusted solicitor, Henry Vane—these—

Those well mayst ask thyself what need had I who once did live with thee so close, to send a letter to thee from the far side of the grave.

I had minded me, never to tell thee this, but now I am about to die, I must needs render back to every man what things I have of his.

I do not ask thy pardon. I know thou wilt not give it. My sister Arabelle died in her northern convent the year she was eighteen, else had my secret sunk into the grave with me.

The estate, thou knowest, never was entailed, and so my father when he died, left half to Arabelle and half to me. She always was a pious wench, and till thou camest down to Loring court, she swore she'd take the veil. But maids be proverbially of a changeable temper, and it was not long before I saw her of a different mind. And there thou hast the reason for my deed.

Farewell! Think of me kindly as thou canst.

Thine erstwhile friend and comrade,
HARRY LORING.

The old bachelor's face was white and the hands which broke the black seal of the packet trembled piteously.

"After so many years," he almost sobbed. "My little lass. My little lass."

He scarcely heeded the oval miniature that came, first. Its chain slipped along his fingers, and it dangled in the firelight as he bent above the letters.

There were only four of them the

first three dated a week apart, the last three months later.

Mine Own Dear Love:

'Tis with the greatest dread that I sit me down to pen my first love letter. Dread lest thou—gay spark of town—mayst deem it illy writ and countrified. I pray thee to forgive all that there be amiss therewith, and think only of the love that the writer bears thee.

'Tis but a day since thou wast with me, and yet, to me it seems a year. The sunlight all has faded from the sky—I trow thou hast taken it to London with thee. I pray thee, send a little of it back again, to her who is

THINE ARABELLE.

Mine Own Dear Love:

Thy letter has not come and now, methinks, I was distraught to think it would,—so soon. What time hath your gay city gentleman for the writing of lengthy epistles. Let it not trouble thee that I long to hear, Dear Heart. 'Tis but natural a silly maid should cry for what she can not have. But send me word anon, I prithee, for 'tis weary waiting in this dull old home.

I mind my wheel and broderery frame, tend to my pigeons and dream of my loved in London town.

If I had a mother, or a sister, the days might pass less heavily, but my brother being busy with his hawks and hounds, I am left over much alone, to my sweet dream of thee.

How fair will that day dawn which brings thee to me! Thou saidst it would be in June, when the sward is green again and the thrushes sing. I would the winter were behind me, and the spring were here.

I fear me this missive is less staid than strict decorum would demand, but I am a country lass, and know not London ways.

Farewell! Dear Heart. Thou knowest that I am

THINE ARABELLE.

Mine Own True Heart:

Now do I know that thou are indisposed, and my heart goes out to thee,—sick and alone, with none but servants by thee.

Would that I might tend thee, for thou wouldst swear I was a better nurse than any grey clad sister.

My brother is riding to the town, and he hath promised me to give this to thine hands, and when he cometh home will bring thee to me.

And now, farewell! I love thee better than my life.

THINE ARABELLE.

A tear trickled down the old bachelor's wrinkled cheek and blistered the cover of the last letter. Within were other marks like that one.

To Mr. Richard Oakley:

Honoured Sir—It hath been told me of how that thou wilt never come to Loring Court again—that thou wouldst wed a lady of the town, if thy troth were not plight to me, and so I write thee this to tell thee,—not that I love thee not,—but that I will not wed with thee.

Think not that I am enangered. 'Tis but right that thou shouldst mate with one more fitted to thy splendid life than I.

Blame not thyself. 'Twas not thy doing more than mine. Only in thy happy life, bethink thee sometimes kindly of me, and forgive me, that I never thought to take thee not in earnest.

She who was once

THINE ARABELLE.

The miniature swung and glittered in the firelight—now the sunny curls glowed, and now the dainty cheek.

The old bachelor's white head sunk upon his hands. "Arabelle," he whispered. "Arabelle."

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President E. B. Andrews, Lincoln, Neb.

My Dear Sir: This year we have many more official calls for good teachers than we have had suitable candidates.

In order that we may be fully prepared to meet the vacancies which are coming in now and which will arise continually during the year, the board of directors of this bureau has decided to grant free registration to those members of your institution who care to teach. This free membership will extend from this time until March 1, 1904. The offer is made upon the condition that they enroll at once.

We know that we can be helpful to many of those who enroll, and we believe that you will find it to your interest as well as ours to have the enclosed offer placed upon your bulletin board. We shall very greatly appreciate the favor.

Trusting that you will give the matter prompt attention, and thanking you for the favor of knowing what action you take, I am very cordially yours,
ROBERT M'CAJ,
Manager.

Professor Brigham of Colgate University, New York, has just issued a book entitled, "Influence of Geographical Conditions on History." Mr. Brigham is an old friend of Dr. Condra. The book contains a very able discussion on the development of the plains and in connection with those are a number of plates and engravings, of which a view of the University campus is the most imposing. The book is written in an interesting style but is most valuable to students of economic geography in the scientific and clear treatment of this feature of our country.

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