

A MAY SLOWLY.

O Mary, all months And all days are thine own; In the last days their joyousness When they are gone; And we give to thee May,

Not because it is best, But because it comes first, And is pledge of the rest. -Cardinal Newman.

SEALED ORDERS

Bess Courage was standing at her door. Her golden hair was flying a little wild, round her face; she gathered her black skirts with one hand behind her, and with the other began flinging crumbs to the peacocks.

Up the avenue came a rattle and drip of horses; the peacocks fled shrieking down the great white steps, and the lady's skirts were half hidden in a gay whirl of feathers. She laughed to herself, and then looked with a lithe, dramatic air at the carriage roof piled with trunks.

"How do you do, Polly?" The visitor was a stout woman, elderly, and of the kind who pry. She hopped up the steps, with the bold air of a man in relation.

"It was kind of you to ask me, Aunt Elizabeth," she said. She never allowed poor Bess to forget that she was her aunt by marriage.

Bess put up her hands to her flying golden hair and smiled. The visitor followed her to look to where a lean man was tramping up, dragged down by the weight of a huge portmanteau.

"It can't be Joseph?" she cried and frowned. "Oh," said Bess quickly. "I thought you would amuse each other."

It was her duty to ask these relatives once a year, and she had thought to take them both at a gulp. But the arrivals glared at each other with eyes full of deadly hate, as the man approached, injured and hot and dusty.

"Why are you walking?" cried the hostess shocked. He put down his portmanteau with an affected sigh. "It's nothing, my aunt. Simply the look of Alamanon."

Bess was accustomed to thrills like that made by her late husband's people. The general had been arbitrary in his testamentary dispositions.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "The carriage had to go to the other station for Mrs. Cox, but I said a cab."

"The porter was very pressing that I should take a cab," said Joseph, with the air of having outwitted an interested party; but I caught up my bag and slipped through the upper gate. I can't afford."

"You would not have had to pay for it," said Bess. "I ordered the cab to bring you."

"Oh!" in a useful gasp. Bess turned toward the hall. "Come in and have tea before you go up to dress," she said with a perplexed smile. Four things, they hated her, as she knew; but it was awkward to find that they should also hate each other. They followed her in, walking far apart.

"Anybody dining with you to-night?" asked Mrs. Cox casually, as she stirred her tea. "I've asked Dalcarres."

The enemies' eyes were lit with a sudden gleam. "John Gordon, of Dalcarres, was standing tall and shy, among the dim lights of the drawing room. It was empty; but there was a slight quiver in the curtains shutting in the little writing den beyond. He heard a strange sound, like sobbing, behind the glimmering Indian reeds. He had begun to march forward, and then he had stopped, afraid.

He was a big man, with strong arms and a little stoop of the shoulders; not a smiling stoop, but the kind that often comes leaning over a horse, as a long man will. There was no mistaking John Gordon's seat in the saddle.

He took a long stride at last—cagor, unsteady, across all the gray litter of this woman's room; but his step had been heard already; the woman's inside had lifted her heart with a start. He reached her to an instant, parting the jingling reeds.

"Why were you crying?" he said abruptly. "It was nothing," said Bess. "I—I'm rather tired."

She looked straight at him, with a little defiant smile, but her lip was quivering back to tears. John Gordon took both her hands determinedly in his; his eyes were started yet with that sound of bitter crying.

"Look here," she said. "What is the matter? Trust me, I'm an old friend. Mrs. Courage—I'm an old friend. Perhaps—"

He broke off abruptly, waiting. Her cheeks grew scarlet, and she could not any longer look him straight in the face; she turned away her rumpled golden head as she felt his strong fingers tight on hers.

"Oh," she said, "don't mist me. I'm just a coward. I've got those two in the house, and they hate me so. They would like me to die; they are always watching, watching. I remember—I heard—how eager they were once when I was ill."

"Why?" asked Dalcarres. He remembered. There had been stories of their impatience. He had ridden ten miles each evening, and waited in the snow to catch the doctor. Had she feared that, too?

"Because of that awful money. Oh, how I hate it." A curious line came around John Gordon's mouth, as if—but he held her hands fast and listened.

"I saw them look at each other," she said, "and their faces were simply murderous. If they can look like that at each other because one of them might get it—oh! how must they look at me? It frightens me. I see them with poison in the cup I drink and if I should hear them at night creeping—creeping—"

"The little hands tightly clasped in his were working. Was this the Bess Courage whose pluck was famous, the richest woman in the county, and the most unattainable? "Laugh at me," she said, wistfully. "Oh, laugh at me; but remember I'm

a most poor woman and a stranger, and—and I'm all alone."

John Gordon felt a sudden leap at his heart; he put out his strong right arm to fold round her and hold her safe—and then there was a high cackle behind the reeds, and Mrs. Cox sidled in.

"Half in the dark, Aunt Elizabeth. Do you want your poor relation to break her neck?" putting relation in the singular was a fine slap at the man who walked just behind.

"It's dinner, I think," said the widowed girl, who held that nook title. She lifted her head bravely, as became a general's widow, and led the way formally with Dalcarres. The other two had to walk side by side.

Involuntarily they looked at each other and then at the pair in front. "Oh!" said Joseph.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Cox, significantly. "Too cautious." Then they glared at each other again like tigers.

They were still sitting at dessert, a silent little company. Bess had been trying to talk and failed, and Dalcarres was gazing at her with a slow earnestness that was not lost upon the two third parties. Now one of the servants brought in a telegram.

The mistress of the house took it up listlessly as a thing of business; then she read it with a little cry:—"Oh, it's Archie," she said. "It's Archie."

They all started. Surprise had driven away all the wistful weariness of her manner; her eyes were shining, her cheeks were red.

"And who is Archie?" asked Joseph, quickly. "My cousin—my soldier cousin," said Bess. "He has got leave—he is coming home—he has landed."

Mrs. Cox looked at her thoughtfully. "Let me see," she said. "Did I meet him at the wedding?"

"No," answered Bess, a bright gleam brightening the young eagerness in her face. "He sailed for India that morning."

"Oh!" "We were brought up together, you know," said she, turning to Dalcarres—the only one who had asked nothing—and I haven't seen him since. Polly—"

Mrs. Cox was attentive. "You must stay on with me while he is here, to—"

"To play propriety," said Mrs. Cox. "Of course."

"I shall be charmed," said Joseph, calmly adding himself to the invitation. There was a certain breathlessness in both their voices.

John Gordon said good-night soon, his horse was brought round, and he galloped away in the dark. Bess had thanked him for coming in a neighborly fashion to cheer them up, but her eyes were still dazzled with that surprise.

Joseph, having politely seen him to the door, returned to find that the other two had retired. He was about to take up his own candle, when he heard a rustle of skirts above—Mrs. Cox foraging for a novel to read in bed. She paused on the stairs, and then, believing the coast clear, ventured in. "Oh!" She halted, caught in her thick red dressing gown, with her hair pinched up in pins all around her head—and the rest left behind her—and she glared at Joseph as one might at a serpent.

"I'm exceedingly glad to see you," she said. There was a civility in his tone, or else a horrid sarcasm. It arrested her in her flight.

"Why?" she asked. "Because I think the time has come for us to form an alliance."

She looked at him sharply, and then, suddenly, she sat down. They exchanged glances of intelligence, in their eyes an odd mixture of triumph and apprehension.

"We both know the terms," said Joseph. "It was our late uncle's will."

"Everything to his widow," answered Mrs. Cox promptly, "until she married."

"Or if she died," said Joseph, it would go to the next of kin."

"Don't suggest," gasped Mrs. Cox, looking guiltily round. "He laughed sardonically. "I was not suggesting that she should die."

"By the terms of her uncle's will, if she marries again she is to lose everything—and the money is to come to an individual named in a sealed envelope in the hands of the lawyers. Polly—"

He paused, meaningly. "Then, as luck would have it, in walked Joseph."

Ten minutes later he was being literally shaken. "What possessed you to interrupt me?" said Mrs. Cox, injured and indignant. "Another minute and they would have come to an understanding. Now it may be put off for days."

"Elizabeth seemed glad to see me—almost relieved," said Joseph. Mrs. Cox looked at him with warlike scorn. "She had to pretend," said she.

Archie had always been imperious with Bess, and time had not made him less so. His air of proprietorship was the revival of an ancient habit; and yet, when it struck her, Bess felt as if up in arms. He came to her as she was standing at the window in her writing den, and looked over her shoulder. Somebody was riding away from the door.

"Who is that?" he asked curiously. Bess started. "It's Mr. Gordon, of Dalcarres," she said. "He's asked me to stay to lunch, but he wouldn't; and you had vanished with Polly Cox."

"What did he want?" asked Archie. Bess lifted her chin at his lordly tone; she was not accustomed to any man's imperiousness. "I was on business," she said. "I'm buying a farm of his."

"Oh," said Archie. "What is it? We mustn't let him cheat you. Can't we ride over and have a look?"

"Cheer me," said Bess. She was angry with Dalcarres; he had been so queer and curt, and had ridden away so fast; but cheer her! If only he could hear that cool suggestion.

"Yes. All these people look upon you as lawful spoil," said Archie. "A forlorn widow, I suppose."

He did not understand that she was rather angry. "Poor little girl," he said sympathetically. "You've been having a bad time lately. I dare say. A woman is never happy when she is rich. Well, I'm here; so all that is past."

"Thank you," said Bess. Archie came a little nearer. His manner was more than ever suggestive of the possessive case.

"Mrs. Cox was telling me you had been fairly plagued with admirers. A rank of our late hunting snags. She made me feel quite nervous."

Bess laughed. "Oh, no," she said. "I'm spared that. The will keeps them aloof."

"The will," said Archie. His fingers went up suddenly, frightenedly, to his moustache. He drew back with a start.

"Yes. You know if I marry I lose it all."

"What?" Archie was breathless with astonishment, and he looked at her as if she must be mad. "I never heard that. You never told me."

"I told you long ago; in my first letter after—after—"

"I never had it," he interrupted fiercely like a man injured man. "Annie and John and the matter all said it was left to you altogether. And I understood from the lawyers—"

There was an extraordinary change in his manner. He stared at her, speaking like an accuser. "You must have mistaken them," Bess said steadily. "But, Archie, it does not matter."

"Matter? The old curmudgeon! What a shame—that a wicked shame."

"Don't!" with a warning cry. "I can't help it," said Archie, furiously. "I never liked him; I'd too-

good reason. But I didn't think he was such a vindictive wretch to chain you to his grave like that. I hope he's gone to a bad place—that's all." He stopped, confounded.

Bess faced him, white at first, with angry eyes; but as she listened her face grew as red as fire.

"How dare you!" she cried. "He is dead, and he can't defend himself. Oh, you coward, I tell you I loved and worshipped him; he was my hero when I was a child—you remember that. I told him I'd rather be his nurse than be a Queen; and I was proud of him to the last. He was right—he was right. God only knows what he saved me."

She flung out her hands as if to ward off a danger, and turned and left him. Archie stood there dumb. He saw her rush past the blank horror of Mrs. Cox in the room beyond, all too near for dignity, and so disappear. There was a crash of a glass door shut very furiously; she could not trust herself in the house any longer.

Archie sighed and whistled, utterly crestfallen. Another house of cards had fallen in the dust.

Bess did not know where she was running; she was desperately angry. All she cared for was to feel the wind beating in her face and to get away from Archie.

At last she grew breathless. She sat down on the grass and laughed and cried, with her cheeks again white with anger.

As luck would have it, John Gordon, of Dalcarres, was taking a solitary walk round the farm he was going to sell, and which lay so near the lands of his neighbor. Walking along thoughtfully, with a gun under his arm, he presently saw a rabbit. He fired, and the air was shaken with a little white dash of smoke.

"Oh!" She lifted her head with a cry and saw him—saw his look of horror as he sprung forward and was with her in three strides.

"Mrs. Courage," he was saying, "I might have shot you. What are you doing here?"

He was unwell in his alarm. Doubtless she made a strange spectacle sitting there.

"If you must know," she said, recklessly, "I was crying."

"Why?" His voice was still unsteady, but very kind. She felt a sudden, bitter impatience at his manner, like that of a queen's adviser, always faithful, a little distant.

"Because I am poor," she said. She had not expected to cause such an effect with her scornful words. It was worse than Archie.

"How?" he asked. "I told the colonel I wanted leave to get married."

"But—ard you?" Archie laughed oddly at her exclamation. "I—I—hope so," he said, meaningly. "Then, as luck would have it, in walked Joseph."

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Archie, looking on entirely as a spectator, fancied he caught a twinkle in the formal mask of the speaker, as he ignored also, or could he give a guess.

"An institution, after all, by George," said he. "The general's niece and nephew, forgetting in their excitement that their interests were identical, glared like a cat and dog at each other. But Bess, stripped of her riches, smiled valiantly at Dalcarres.

"Whereas"—the seal was broken. They heard the general's commands, stilled and formal, but firm as the field of battle—"whence," my wife, Elizabeth, has found a man worth all she has hereby forfeited for his sake; and whereas this man will have married her for herself, and is proved worthy of her trust—and mine. I hereby leave all I do possess of—to my dear girl as a wedding present."

There was a short hush of consternation. The general's surviving relatives looked at each other fiercely, each feeling tricked by the other into a match, and the lawyer, his twinkle justified by results, came forward to repeat his congratulations. But Archie turned on his heel.—R. Stansby, in Chambers' Journal.

IN MEMORIAM. With mournful hearts and tear-stained eyes, let Erin's sons bewail, For cold in his grave a patriot lies, true son of Granauwale. With pen and voice he always strove, O! Erin to set free, And like a valiant hero bold he fought for liberty.

'Twas on the glorious summer time, the twenty-second day, Of May in nineteen hundred, that our dear friend passed away Unto that bright celestial home where the good shall all find rest, And dwell on high forevermore with saints and angels blest.

O, well may Mother Erin weep—she lost a soldier true, Who never swerved from her caused when danger was in view. He was the Irishman's advocate against oppressive greed, And always served his fellow man apart from class and creed.

A true unselfish patriot—his life was not in vain, Who strove to set his native land her long lost rights regain; Nought could suppress upon this earth, till he was laid to rest, The burning love of Motherland that flamed within his breast.

He's won regard, respect, esteem, from those he's left behind, His name with Emmett and O'Connell in history shall ever shine. From the pen of able writers the future age may see, What those illustrious patriots would do for liberty.

When clouds of dark misfortune loomed o'er his ill-fated land, He threw aside all obstacles and nobly led the van. To abolish cruel landlords' rule and tyranny to put down; Oppressors vile were forced to yield when our hero was around.

Where is the nation that produced greater warriors, Or more sterling patriots than Ireland mourns? But the three that are dearest to the hearts of true Irishmen Are the illustrious names of Emmett, O'Connell and Burns.

Experience proves its hard to move the mountains of the land, Or stop the tides Jehovah guides with the waving of His hand, It's just as hard to change a regard where true love it does bind, For such unites Dr. Burns forever with those he left behind. JOHN MOHAN. Toronto, May 22nd, 1901.

OBSERVING THE ROUTINE From the Family Herald. Certain of the theatres in Russia are under the control of the State, and the actors are, therefore, subject to government control. A famous dancer at one of these theatres desired to secure a month's leave of absence in order to recover her health by a tour of the provinces. She accordingly went to the government official to obtain the usual permission. He received her politely, and asked for her written application.

"I have no written application," was the answer. "I had no idea such a thing was necessary."

"Not necessary, madam," replied the official. "Why, nothing can be done without it."

"What am I to do, then?" "Here are pen and paper. Be so good as to sit down and write what I dictate."

She sat down, and the petition was written, signed and folded. "And now," said the representative of the State, "you have only to deliver it."

"To whom?" she asked. "To whom?" repeated the official, with a smile at her simplicity. "To me, of course."

Then, taking the petition which he himself had dictated, he produced his spectacles, wiped them and carefully adjusting them upon his nose, read over the whole document as if he had never seen it before, filed it in due form, and then, turning to the impatient danseuse, said, with the utmost gravity:—"Madam, I have read your petition, and regret exceedingly that I cannot grant it."

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