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MAY.  
BY L. R. BAKER.  
The brightest and the fairest month of all—  
The beautiful May—the spring-time's royal  
feast  
Has dawned in radiant beauty, and beguiles  
Our waiting hearts. Her clear exultant voice  
Has hidden, in their wild, exuberant joy,  
The mountain streamlets from their rocky  
beds  
To sing a gleeful lay as down they rush  
Through budding forests to our peaceful dell.  
In silent groves an echoing note awakes—  
It is the cooing of feathered tribes,  
Whose voices have been hushed for weary  
months,  
While seeming death reigned o'er the valley  
fair.  
But now the chorus, like a liquid stream,  
Swells to a crystal river. From all sides  
Bursts winsome melody. O beautiful scene!  
Our vale an earthly paradise becomes,  
That glows with life. The modest violet  
Lifts up its head, blue-bells are 'mid the grass  
And here droops low the wild anemone,  
That blushes 'neath the gracious glance of  
day.  
And laughing childhood joins her glorious  
song;  
The tiny bark drifts down yon shining rill.  
The white-winged kite is bounding into space  
The hoops reel smoothly o'er the short green  
sward;  
Life is a sunny day with ne'er a cloud  
Hovering above the happy, restless forms,  
And weary mothers raise their eyes and smile  
To see again the joy that once was theirs:  
And mortals, travel-stained and sore of foot  
With wandering down the rugged paths of life  
Forget their heartache in the bliss of spring  
And sigh, and falter, and look up and sing.  
—CATHOLIC MIRROR

## THE POOR GENTLEMAN

### CHAPTER IX.

'Explain yourself,' cried Gustave, alarmed; 'explain yourself, sir? Has death been at Grinselhoff's? Is my last hope destroyed?'

'No, no,' replied the notary, quickly; 'don't tremble so; they both live, but they have been stricken by a great misfortune.'

'Well, well,' exclaimed Gustave, with questioning eagerness, rising from his chair.

'Be calm, be calm, sir,' said the notary, soothingly; 'sit down and listen; it is not so terrible as you may perhaps think, since fortune enables you to soften their misery.'

'Oh, God be thanked,' cried Gustave; 'but let me beg you to hasten your disclosures, for your slowness racks me.'

'Know, then,' continued the notary; 'that during your absence the bond in question fell due. For many months De Vlierbeck made unavailing efforts to find money to honor it at maturity; but all his property was mortgaged, and no one would assist him. In order to escape the mortification of a forced sale De Vlierbeck offered every thing at public auction. Even down to his furniture and clothes. The sale produced about enough to pay his debts, and everybody was satisfied by the honorable conduct of De Vlierbeck; who plunged himself into absolute beggary to save his name.'

'And so he lives in the chateau of his family only as a tenant.'

'No; he has left it.'

'And where does he reside, then, I want to see him instantly.'

'I do not know.'

'How—you do not know?'

'Nobody knows where he dwells: he left the province without informing one of his designs.'

'Alas,' cried Gustave, with profound emotion, 'and it is so. Shall I be forced to live longer without them? Without knowing what has become of them? Can you give me no hint or clue to their residence. Does nobody, nobody know where they are?'

'Nobody,' replied the notary. 'The evening after their sale De Vlierbeck left Grinselhoff on foot and crossed the moor by some unknown road; I made efforts to discover his retreat, but always without success.'

As this sad news was imparted to Gustave he grew deadly pale, trembled violently, and covered his forehead with his clasped hands; as if striving to conceal the big tears that ran from his eyes. What the notary first told him of De Vlierbeck had wounded his sensibility though he was less struck by that recital because he had already become partially aware of the poor gentleman's embarrassment, but the certainty that he could not immediately discover his beloved Lenora and snatch her from want overwhelmed him with the bitterest anguish.

The notary fixed his eyes on the

young man, shrugged his shoulders and regarded him with an expression of pity.

'You are young, sir, said he, 'and, like most men in your time of life, exaggerate both pain and pleasure. Your despair is unfounded; for it is easy in our time to discover people whom we want to find. With a little money and diligence we may be sure in a few days, to discover Monsieur De Vlierbeck's retreat, even if he is gone abroad to a foreign country. If you are willing to charge me with the pursuit I will spare neither time nor trouble to bring you satisfactory news.'

Gustave stared hopelessly at the notary as he grasped his hand and replied, with a smile of gratitude.

'Oh, render me that inestimable service, sir! Spare no money; ransack heaven and earth if it is necessary; but, in God's name, let me know, and let me know soon, where De Vlierbeck and his daughter are hidden. It is impossible for me to describe the sufferings of my heart or the ardor of my desire to find them. Let me assure you that the first good news you bring will be more grateful to my soul than if you had restored me to life.'

'Fear nothing, sir,' answered the notary. 'My clerks shall write letters of inquiry this very night in every direction. To-morrow morning early I will be off to Brussels and secure assistants from the public offices. If you authorize me to spare no expense the secret will disclose itself.'

'And I,' said Gustave, 'I will put the numerous correspondents of our house under contribution, and nothing shall be omitted to detect their refuge, even if I have to travel over Europe.'

'Be of a good cheer, then, Monsieur Gustave,' said the notary; 'for I doubt not we shall soon attain our end. And, now that you are assured of my best service, I will be gratified if you allow me to speak to you a moment quietly and seriously. I have no right to ask what are your intentions, and still less the right to suppose that these intentions can be any thing else than proper in every respect. May I inquire if it is your design to marry Mademoiselle Lenora?'

'That is my irrevocable determination,' replied the young man.

'Irrevocable,' said the notary. 'Be it so! The confidence which your venerable uncle was always pleased to repose in me, and my position as notary of the family, impose on me the duty of settling coolly what you are about to do. You are a millionaire; you have a name which in commerce alone represents an immense capital. Monsieur De Vlierbeck is penniless; his ruin is generally known; and the world, justly or unjustly, looks askance at a ruined man. With your fortune, and your youth and person, you may obtain the hand of an heiress and double your income.'

Gustave listened to the first word of this calculating essay with evident impatience; but he soon turned away his eyes and began to fold up the papers and put them in his portfolio. As the notary finished, he answered, quickly.

'Well, well, I suppose you have done your duty, and I thank you, but we have had enough of that. Tell me who owns Grinselhoff now?'

The man of business appeared considerably disconcerted by the contemptuous interruption of his visitor; yet he strove to conceal his mortification by a sorrowful smile, as he replied.

'I see, sir, that you have taken a firm stand and will do as you please. Grinselhoff was bought in by the mortgages, for the price offered was below its value. Who lives there.'

'It is uninhabited. No one goes to the country in winter.'

'Can it be bought for its present proprietor?'

'Certainly, I am authorized to offer it to any one for the amount of the mortgages.'

'Very well, sir. Consider Grinselhoff as your property from this moment. If you wish visit you will find the keys at the tenant's house.'

Gustave took his hat and made ready to go, and, as he did so, pressed the notary's hand with evident cordiality.

'I am tired and need repose, for I feel

somewhat overcome by the sad news you have given me. May God help you in your efforts to fulfil your promises. My gratitude will surpass all you can imagine. Farewell till to-morrow.'

### CHAPTER X.

Spring, gentle Spring, had thrown aside the funeral garb of winter, and earth awoke again to vigorous life. Grinselhoff reappeared in all the splendor of its wild, natural scenery; its majestic oaks displayed their verdant domes, its roses bloomed as sweetly as of old, elder-blossoms filled the air with delicious odor, butterflies fluttered through the garden and every thicket was vocal with the song of birds.

Nothing seemed changed at Grinselhoff: its roads, its paths, were still deserted, and sad was the silence that reigned in its shadows. Yet immediately around the house there was more life and movement than formerly. At the coach house two grooms were busy washing and polishing a new and fashionable coach while the neigh of the horses resounded from the stable. A trim waiting-maid stood on the door sill laughing and joking with the lackeys, and a respectable old butler looked knowingly on the group.

Suddenly the clear silvery ring of a bell was heard from the parlor, and the waiting-maid ran in, exclaiming, 'Good Heavens, there, Monsieur, ring for his breakfast, and it is not ready yet.'

A few moments afterward she was seen mounting the staircase with a rich silver salver covered with breakfast things and, entering the parlor, she placed them silently on the table before a young gentleman who seemed entirely absorbed by his own thoughts, and then instantly left the room without a word.

The young man began his meal with a careless, indifferent air, as if he either had no appetite or did not know what he was about. The furniture of the apartment in which he sat presented odd and striking contrasts to an observer. While some of the articles were remarkable for the richness and elegance of their modern style, there were chairs, tables, and cabinets whose sombre hue and elaborate carving denoted an antiquity of several centuries.

On the walls were numerous pictures, dimmed by smoke and time, encased in frames that had lost half their ornaments and gilding. These were portraits of warriors, statesmen, priest, and prelates. In the dim corners of the canvas armorial bearings of the house of De Vlierbeck might be seen, and many of the articles of furniture were embellished with the same blazonry.

We were told a while ago that a public sale at Grinselhoff had dispersed among a crowd of competitors every thing that belonged to Monsieur De Vlierbeck. How has it come to pass that these portraits have returned to this old manor on walls which they seemed to have abandoned forever?

The listless youth rose from the table, walked slowly about the room, stopped, looked mournfully at the portraits, recommenced his walk, and approached an antique casket placed on a bracket in the corner. He opened it with apparent indifference and took out some simple jewelry—a pair of ear-rings and a coral necklace. He gazed long at this object as he held them in his hand; a few tears fell on them, a deep sigh escaped from his bosom, and he then replaced the jewels in their casket.

Quitting the room, he descended to the court. Waiters and servant maids saluted as he passed: he acknowledged their civility by a silent nod and went forth to the most secluded parts of the garden. Stopping at the foot of a wild chesnut tree, he threw himself on the ground, where he sat alone in moody reverie until aroused by the ringing voice of Bess, who approached him with a book in her hand.

'Here, sir, is a book which Mademoiselle Lenora used to read. My good gentleman went yesterday to market, where he found the farmer who bought it at the sale. After market was over John accompanied the peasant home, and would not leave him till he had bought the book back again, I suppose it is an excellent book, as Mademoiselle used to love it so; and neither gold nor

silver could ever get it from me if it wasn't for you, sir. Husband says it is called 'Lucifer.'

While she was running on, Gustave seized the book eagerly and ran over its pages without paying attention to what she said. 'Thank you, thank you for your kind attention, mother Bess!' said he. 'You can't think how happy I am when ever I find any thing that belonged to your mistress. Be assured that I will never forget your goodness.' After offering this expression of his thanks to the farmer's wife he opened the book again and began to read without heeding her further. But the good woman did not go away, and soon interrupted him with a question.

'May I ask, sir, if you have any news yet of our young lady?'

Gustave shook his head. 'Not the least scrap of news, mother Bess. My search has been fruitless.'

'That is unlucky, sir. God knows where she may be and what she is suffering. She told me before she went away that she meant to work for her father; but one must have learned to work very early in life to earn a living by our hands. My heart almost breaks when I think of it. Perhaps that good sweet young lady is reduced to work for other people and labors like a slave to get a mouthful of bread. I have been a servant, sir, and I know what it is to work from morning until night for others. And she—she who is so beautiful, so clever, so kind. Oh, sir, it is so terrible, I can't help crying like a child, thinking of her miserable life.'

Gustave was overcome by the simple eloquence of the woman; and remained silent.

'And then to think,' continued Bess, 'she might now be so happy, that she might again become mistress of Grinselhoff, where she was born and grew up! that his father might pass his old days in quietness, and that they are now wandering about the world poor, sick, abandoned outcasts. Oh, sir, it is sad to know that our benefactors are unhappy and to be able to do nothing for them but pray to God and hope for his mercy.'

The simple-minded woman, without it had touched some tender strings in Gustave's heart; and, as she saw the silent tears coursing their way down his cheeks; she said, entreatingly, 'Oh pardon me, sir, for having grieved you so by my talk but my heart was full and my feelings forced their way without knowing it. If I have done wrong, I am sure you too kind to be angry with me for loving our young lady so much and bemoaning her misfortune. Have you no orders for me to-day, sir?'

She was about to go, as Gustave raised his downcast eyes and, restraining his tears, exclaimed.

'I—angry with you, mother Bess—angry, too, because you show affection for our poor Lenora? Oh, no, no! On the contrary, I bless you for it with all my heart. The tears you betrayed from my heart have done me good; for I am very unhappy. Life is a burden; and if God, in his mercy, would take me away from earth, I would gladly die. All hope of seeing her again in this world is gone. Perhaps she is awaiting me in the next?'

'Oh, sir! how you talk,' cried the peasant woman, in alarm. 'No! no! that cannot be!'

You grieve, my good woman, and shed tears for her,' continued Gustave, without heeding the interruption; 'but don't you see how my soul must be consumed with despair? Alas, for months and months I have implored God for the happiness of seeing her once more! I overcame all obstacles to our marriage, and I became almost mad with joy and impatience as I flew like lightning to the home where I left her; and then my only recompense my only consolation, was to find her gone and the house of her father a wilderness—to know, alas, that she is poor, and, perhaps, languishing in want to know that my noble-hearted and beloved Lenora sinks under the weight of misfortune, and yet to be able to do nothing to relieve her—to be condemned to count in powerless despair her days of affliction; and not even to be sure that suffering has not yet killed her.'