

PARTED BY GOLD

The pirate, who had been a quiet and calm spectator of the skirmish, provided which way it must terminate, knowing an extra sausage, brought that and the other triumph of his industry to the table and poured out the tea.

"What made you so late, Mr. Tubbs?" asked Mr. Montague. "Rehearsal late," said Mr. Tubbs, with his mouth full of sausage. Thompson was huffy as he could be and as contrary as a cat with its tail in its teeth. I don't know what comes to that man at times, whether it's the scenery, the properties, or what else I don't know. Some of these days there'll be a catastrophe, mark my words; he'll blow up or break into pieces, break a blood vessel or spit his head with opening his mouth so wide."

And as if to show that such a tragic result to the manager was among the possibilities, Mr. Tubbs opened his so wide that Pattie laughed and told him to shut it if he didn't want to frighten her.

"So," continued Mr. Tubbs, "what with Thompson's bad humor, Parks, the shitter, pushing on a dungeon scene for the fairies' glen, and old Bloward puffing away three notes below the rest, the affair did not go off so well as might be expected. Not," he added, quickly, seeing Montague look around at Mary, who was listening with downcast face, and one small, well-shaped hand toying with the teaspoon—"not as Miss Mary didn't do her part. Oh, never fear, it won't be her fault if the new part's a failure. She's a success, that's what she is. Miss Mary, my dear, I drink your health; long life, prosperity. May 'Even her-ness yet' and with a burlesque of solemnity he lifted the teacup to his mobile lips.

Mary laughed. "You are all too good to me," she said, in her gentle, self-deprecating way. "You are not strict enough; I made two mistakes this afternoon, and Mr. Thompson only said that I was wrong."

"Hem!" hummed the comedian, significantly closing one eye and looking around the room with the other. "We all know what that means. No fear of his bullying you, Miss Mary."

"Why not?" asked Mary, looking up with genuine curiosity. The comedian was about to speak, but, seeing Gentleman Montague tugging in his chair, coughed instead, and, putting on an irresistible, love-jorn look, said:

"Who could be cross with so divine, so—er—angelic a creature? Had I a heart—"

"There," laughed the beautiful girl. "I won't stay to listen any longer. I always run away, you know, when you grow complimentary. I—six o'clock, and quite time I was dressing."

She arose, lit a candle, and held the door open while her father lifted Pattie in his arms and carried her into the next room.

He came back with a troubled look on his face and resumed his seat, looking first at the fire, then at the door through which his two daughters had gone.

Mr. Tubbs was the first one to break the silence which both felt was growing embarrassing.

"Miss Pattie seems a little better, sir, I'm glad to see."

"Yes—yes," said Gentleman Montague. "Bless her heart, Tubbs, she is better, she—she has more strengthening things now—now Mary has gone on the stage."

The troubled look grew more marked as he said this in a hesitating, reluctant sort of way, and Mr. Tubbs, with keener sensitiveness than might have been expected from him, hastened to change the subject.

"Very fond of her sister, sir, she seems. It's a beautiful sight to see so much love between them. Now she's gone, dress her heart, to trim Mary's dress, maybe."

"That's it, that's it, Tubbs," said the father, still looking at the fire. "They are very fond of one another, never apart if they can help it. Never apart, Tubbs."

"Yes," said the low comedian, half startled by the sudden look from the still, piercing eyes.

"What did you mean to-night, just now, by hinting that Miss Mary received special favor, and—kindness?" asked Mr. Thompson, the stage manager.

Tubbs hesitated. In common with the rest of the Signet company, he knew Gentleman Montague's falling, as it was called. Mr. Montague was always spoken of by those who disliked him as 'Proud Montague'; those who liked him, and they were many, always retained the complimentary prefix, and spoke of him as Gentleman Montague, or the Prince, or the Duke.

He had always been a reserved man, never talked of his affairs or of his family; but one night at a theatrical dinner, when the champagne was in and the wits out, he had let fall some half-dozen sentences, proud and haughty, spoken of himself as a ruined gentleman, the last stone of a fallen house, and winding up with what threatened to be a burst of tears, requested those nearest him to mark what punishment fell on those who disgraced their birth and lineage by descending to the level of stage players.

Much of this had been taken as the maudlin nonsense of a man in his cups, but there were some who nodded their heads sagely and believed that there was some truth in the passionate outburst.

Montague's conduct had helped to strengthen these hints. He was reserved, as we have said, but more than that, he was very particular in his bearing toward those about him, infused a dash of pride's humility when speaking with the manager, and treated his fellow actors and the men about the stage with a condescending stand-off, yet not offensive air.

This pride of his had received a fatal blow lately. Of these two children, the younger, Pattie, had been a cripple from the first moment of the life which her mother had killed herself in giving her. Upon the elder, he had managed, by dint of the strictest economy, to bestow a decent education. Mary was the pride of his life, the apple of his eye.

While telling her nothing of her antecedents, he kept from her all knowledge of his life of life. She knew that her father was an actor, in her simple, loving heart believed him to be the greatest tragedian the world had ever seen, but she had never entered a theatre, never knew how hard the struggle he made for his daily bread and her education.

Meanwhile this sharp tussle with poverty drew their hearts together. In no corner of our great city could be found more love than in the three little rooms at the back of the great thoroughfare.

Mary grew up, a lady in education, manner, and—her father more than hinted—birth, also, when suddenly the blow came to his hope and pride.

Little Pattie grew weaker—more loving, gentle and sweet-hearted, but weaker.

These two loving hearts were wrung each day at sight of the falling strength in the body that enclosed their poor darling's soul.

The read it, and worried over it. Mary did more. She saw the doctor, pushed him with inquiries, and learned that the lamp might be kept burning in the frail body if it received more nourishment.

"Madelira, my dear Miss Montague, chickens, delicacies of that sort above all, fine old Madelira—are the only things that will pull her around."

Had he prescribed fourteen ounces of melted diamonds each day, Montague could not have been more horrified and overwhelmed.

"Where," he asked himself, "and how am I to get Madelira at a guinea a bottle?"

Where, indeed? Mary soon tried to answer this.

"Father," said she, one day, "when are you going to send me to get my living and help poor Pattie?"

He fell to tears at this, and declared that they should both and all starve before she would use her hands or compromise her pride by working for them; then went into a fit of despair and begged a rise of salary from the manager of the Signet, where he was engaged.

The manager, a kind-hearted, but money-making, and, therefore, money-loving man, gave him a rise, slight and quite insufficient to purchase guinea bottles of wine.

The manager did more; he called in one night at Montague's rooms and the thing was done.

He saw a beautiful girl, with deep, clear eyes that beamed intelligence and talent at every glance, lips made—as he afterwards averred—to astound and delight a full house. He saw with a connoisseur's eye the flexible grace of her every movement, the regal turn of her head and heard the clear, well-bred inflection of her voice.

He stared all the evening, and, when departing, drew Gentleman Montague outside, buttoned him there and whispered:

"Montague, you've got a treasure!" "A—what?" asked Montague, who always hesitated in his speech off the stage.

"A treasure," repeated the manager; "that girl of yours is the most beautiful woman I ever saw, and has got the mellowest voice. Why, man, are you blind that you don't see it?"

"Well," said Montague, a darkening flush arising to his brow, and his hand, unseen by the manager, clinched at his side.

"Well!" echoed the manager, sarcastically, but feeling fully that he was on dangerous ground and speaking to Gentleman Montague. "Don't you see? She was made for the stage—born for the boards!"

Montague's hand rose in the air and seemed about to fall on the manager's shrewd face, but he let it fall to his side again and groaned instead of striking, which was on the whole a



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The manager shrugged his shoulders. "All right, Gentleman Montague," he said, turning away and twisting his hat. "No offense meant; none whatever. I may think you foolish or I may not. But look here, if you should think of it, I'll make you an offer. Let me have the young lady at the Signet, and I'll have her trained and give her a salary of six guineas a week to start with."

Montague's face blackened, and this time his fist would undoubtedly have fallen, but a hand, small and white, caught it.

Both men started and looked awkward when they saw that the interruption to this emphatic refusal was Miss Montague, and more awkward still when a second glance showed them that she had heard the whole of the dialogue.

Talk of an angel and you hear the rustle of its wings. "Father," she said, still holding his arm and drawing it within her own, "why do you refuse this gentleman's offer? Six guineas a week may save poor Pattie's life. If they would, and did not take them when we could get them, how should we look upon the flowers over her grave? Not with clear consciences, father dear. Now, sir, I have heard your offer," she continued, turning to the manager and giving Montague no time to speak: "do you still tender it?"

"I do, Miss Montague," said the manager, taking off his hat and forced into more than his usual respect by the quiet dignity of her manner. "I do, miss, and I think you would be wrong to refuse under the circumstances."

"So do I," said the girl, proudly, "and we accept, sir."

The manager's story of Mary Montague's engagement and Mr. Tubbs, in revolving the answer to Gentleman Montague's question, went over it and decided that it would not be well to give the truthful reason for his refusal.

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The rough, honest, though somewhat politic words cheered the moody gentleman's heart. He arose, stretched himself with a cad sort of stateliness, finished his cup of tea, and, clearing his throat, said:

"I'm glad to hear it, Mr. Tubbs; I'm glad to hear it. It has been a bitter blow to me, but that's neither here nor there. Will you hand me my coat?" he added, as Mary entered the room, warmly wrapped up and blushing beautiful. "We will start now, I think, after I have brought Pattie in again."

Pattie was enveloped in the shawl, enthroned in the great armchair, and with a kiss from Mary and her father and a most respectful reverential adieu from Mr. Tubbs, left a little elfin queen of the tiny room to await until the two came home tired and ready for rest.

Meanwhile the three actors trudged on to the Signet. All the conversation fell to Mr. Tubbs and Mary. The spirit of the pirate had already fallen upon Montague, and as he walked along the cold only made him more silent and moody.

Perhaps he was already changing his domestic skin and voice for his theatrical one, perhaps he was really listening all the while to the chattering at his side.

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