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AN OLD MAID'S MONOLOGUE.

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(From the Catholic Telegraph.)

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

We were to go to New York by way of Lake Champlain, and all those beautiful and interesting spots that cluster around the north-eastern corner of New York; rendered doubly interesting by Cooper's magic pen, or the not less pathetic stories which the history of the early settlers give.

The Percivals were to remain in Montreal on a visit to some friends there; and as they lived in Philadelphia, and we expected to spend part of the winter there, we looked forward, with pleasure, to meeting soon again.

I can not say that the rest of the trip was so delightful to Estelle; she took great pleasure in the visits to the scenes of historic interest, and could not but admire the beautiful scenery of the region through which we passed, but of course she missed her former companion, and his care of her; and, altogether, the conclusion of the tour was not as pleasant as the beginning.

Not that she ever said so to me; she frankly confessed that she missed the Percivals, though it was of them both she spoke, and she returned again to her close attendance upon me, only going where I went, and seeing what I saw. But it was very plain to me how much she missed Harry, and I naturally began to wonder if he missed her sweet companionship, and how they would meet in Philadelphia, and what the result of this chance summer intimacy would be. It was very natural that I should have these thoughts, but I said nothing to Estelle about them, and she never by any chance mentioned his name to me, I was perfectly satisfied that he was much in her thoughts, and I was not too old to take pleasure in plans for my darling's future, nor to remember my own short lived dream of happiness.

We stopped at Saratoga for a couple of weeks. In the same hotel with us I observed an old man who was perfectly helpless, having to be moved about in a chair, his lower limbs and left arm being paralyzed.

His face was withered and drawn as if by a burn or scald, and his beard, which he wore full and heavy, was snowy white, as was his hair.—He had a colored man in attendance, who seemed very attentive and kind, and whose task, I judge, was no sinecure. For those deep black eyes flashed fire sometimes and seemed never at rest, and I did not think he looked as if he bore his enforced helplessness very meekly.

One day Estelle was standing on the porch when he was wheeled out to take the air, as was his custom. She was standing just opposite the door, and hearing the noise of the chair wheels turned suddenly and looked him full in the face. I was sitting not far from her, and saw him start and raise his right hand, which trembled with a palsy of fear and alarm, to his eyes.

'What is your name?' he abruptly asked. When she answered him, simply, he beckoned her to him, and laying his still trembling hand on her arm, scanned her face eagerly; then he pushed her away and shook his head and made a sign to the servant to go on, and in a few moments had disappeared down one of the numerous paths.

During this scene my heart stood still. I understood it perfectly, though Estelle asked me wonderingly what the old gentleman could have meant.

There was no answering chord in her heart struck by those restless eyes and marred and drawn features. She had not the least idea that it was to that poor invalid, chained for the rest of his life to that garden chair, or his bed, that she owed her existence, and for the present I could not enlighten her.

But my heart stood still. Was I to lose my darling after all these years of care and devotion and just when she was doubly precious to me? My first idea was to rush to my room, pack up our trunks and run away by the next train.—However, a little reflection made me decide to wait patiently and quietly and see what would be the result.

CHAPTER IV.

Since her childish question of 'when are we going back to papa?' Estelle had never mentioned or alluded to her father, and as he was not a pleasant memory to me, I never recalled him to her; so that I was really ignorant as to how far back her memory went in regard to her early childhood.

Certainly she had been perfectly happy with me, and my affection for her seemed to satisfy all her cravings for love, and therefore I had no reason to fear she missed her natural ties. Of course she always kept, and I encouraged, a tender recollection of her mother, but that her other

parent could be anything to her I did not think possible.

Desirous of having the interview I anticipated over as soon as possible, I lingered on the porch, but he did not return. Growing impatient I determined to follow him and have it over at once. I had had a task for Estelle's willing fingers waiting for several days, and as it was one that would keep her in our room for some time, and I was anxious to get her out of the way for the present I requested her to attend to it then. As soon as she had obeyed me with ready alacrity, I stepped off the porch and walked in the direction I had seen the chair disappear, and presently my heart leaped to my throat, for I saw the invalid approaching.

He had not seen me on the porch so I walked quietly on, waiting the result of meeting me.

He saw me coming, at first without any recognition, but as I drew nearer to him I saw the blood mount to his scarred cheeks, and his eyes gleamed with, I thought, hatred.

I stood still and the colored man wheeled the chair close to where I was and was not going to stop, but his master made an impatient sign to him when he came directly opposite me and he paused.

'I thought so!' he said, looking up at me; 'I thought when I saw her on the porch that you were not far off, and where—where is she?—You can't deceive me now—if you are both here she is not far off.'

'You forget we are not alone,' I replied, glancing at the servant.

'Sam,' he said turning to the man, 'wheel me a little to one side of the path and leave me; I have a small matter of business with this—this lady. Don't go out of sight, but mind you get out of hearing, you black rascal.'

The man obeyed him, pushing the chair, whether intentionally or not I don't know, near an iron bench. I seated myself upon it with an outward composure I was far from feeling in my secret heart.

'Now,' he replied, fiercely, 'you are free to speak. Where is my wife?'

'In heaven,' I replied calmly.

'Dead?' he started at my words. 'Dead, or are you telling me a lie?'

'Your wife died eleven years ago this fall,' I replied taking no notice of his insulting words.

'And in your arms I suppose,' said he with a sneer.

'Yes,' I replied, 'thank heaven, in my arms, but before she died she left for you her forgiveness.'

'Ha, ha! she did did she? but she left her child to you.'

'Yes,' said I growing sick and faint, for it was coming now I felt.

'Well, suppose I don't choose you to have her any longer, what will you say then?'

I made no answer but looked at him with open eyes. Whether what he saw in my face moved his heart, what was left of it, or whether he only asked the question to frighten me I don't know; but he went on: 'Don't be uneasy, you may keep your precious charge. What would I do with a young lady on my hands?' and he laughed a miserable laugh. 'No, don't be alarmed, I leave her with you in safety, for if I took her with me I might kill her some day, out of the hate I bear her mother!'

'Great heavens!' I said starting up.

'There don't get excited, I mean what I say; you saw us in our honey moon, that sweet milk and sugar time. You knew then I did not care for her; I saw you did. I didn't care for all the caresses she lavished on me, not all her love, for she did love me, could move me to care for her. I wanted money and she had it; I married her for it, and found, when it was too late, that the law would not let me touch a penny. My feeling for her would never have changed from indifference to hate could I have had my way; but I was check-mated and I hated her.'

Carried away by his feelings his features worked convulsively, and his eyes fairly flashed; he trembled in every limb of his poor stricken body. For my part I sat and gazed upon him in dumb amazement.

'Oh, you are shocked, I dare say,' he cried, again with a derisive laugh, 'you look at the wreck I am and you think it time to call in the priest and prepare my soul for eternity; that's your cant, I know it—but you can spare your pity if you feel any, and your shocked feelings you can put aside for a time, when they will do some good. I'll have no priests mouthing over me, and as for the hereafter, and God, if there is any—'

'Hush!' cried, 'for heaven's sake hush, I can not listen to such blasphemy!' and I rose from my seat.

He had spoken so loud that the attention of several passers-by had been attracted; and I felt uneasy at being seen with him. But he pushed me back into the bench with his right hand, and for a moment I was powerless to move.

'I'll let you go in a moment, but I want you to understand perfectly, all the circumstances of the case. You have brought her up, making a motion towards the hotel, 'to hate and despise me,' of course. I have been held up to her in childhood and youth as the type of all that is horrible and cruel; you need not deny it,' he said seeing that I made a movement to speak. 'because if you did I would not believe you. I know all your cant, every word of it; for that reason, and because she is like her mother, and I hate her, and might some day kill her for the hate, I leave her with you still; she is nothing to me. You don't ask how I came to this state and I shall not tell you. You don't ask what provision I will make for my child; my child! ha, ha! That I will tell you—I am rich; richer than you can guess; how I became so is another thing I will not tell you, but she shall never see a penny of it. I will leave it all to Sam Fish. Yes, leave it all to Sam, and he can come up North and be a gentleman with it.' I sprang up, and before he could prevent it moved out of his arm, and said—

'For the gift you make me of your child I thank you; thank you more than words can tell; your money I do not want, she shall not suffer from that; but I cannot and will not stay here to listen to your horrible language; may God forgive you and open your eyes to your horrible state before it is too late.'

I turned and left him, but I heard him call Sam, and then speak to himself with a chuckle: 'as if I would leave her with you if I wanted her myself.'

I hurried back to the hotel, and to my room. Estelle was there, waiting my return.

I entered the room hastily from the nervous state I was in, though I strove to conceal it as much as possible. But Estelle's affection was quick sighted.

'What is the matter aunt, what has frightened you?' she asked eagerly.

'Nothing has frightened me, my darling,' I replied, taking her in my arms and kissing her.

'Something has disturbed you, aunt,' she said looking into my face, and then continued: 'Have you been taking to that man in the chair?'

'I laughed and pushed back the hair from her brow and kissed her again, but my laugh faltered and my hand trembled and she was not deceived.'

'You have, aunt, and he—he—oh, aunt, let us go away from here; he frightened me, and I don't want to meet him again.'

Had memory and nature been at work, and had her heart divined who he was? I took her face between my hands and looked into her clear eyes.

'You have nothing to fear from him, Estelle; you are only my child and no one else has anything to do with you; but if you wish we will leave here to-night.'

'I do wish it, aunt,' and we went away that evening.

CHAPTER V.

Walking down Chestnut street one day after we had been in Philadelphia a week or so, I felt Estelle give a start and heard a smothered exclamation. Looking ahead in the crowd for the cause of it, I saw Harry Percival advancing towards us.

In another moment he saw us, and throwing away his cigar was at Estelle's side. She looked quietly pleased, and as soon as all first questions were asked, he told us his mother had just purchased a house and was busy furnishing it, but she would come to see us as soon as he told her we were in the city.

We had started on a 'shopping' expedition, but did little of it, for Harry remained at Estelle's side, and although he gave his advice in several cases, I found he distracted her attention so much in others, that in an amused impatience I gave up, and having a visit to pay that would not interest Estelle, I left them to their own sweet wills and went on my own way.

Estelle was home before me; all the evening she showed how pleased she was by many little signs.

The next day Mrs. Percival called, delighted to see us and we glided again into the old intimacy.

As soon as her house was furnished she insisted upon our paying her a visit, which we did, remaining her guests for more than a month.—At length business called me home. I was sorry to carry Estelle away from the many pleasures and attractions that greeted her on every side, and Mrs. Percival begged me to let her remain the rest of the winter with her. But this kind invitation, Estelle declined accepting, she was too much of a baby she said to be left by her aunt, and if I went she must go too.

The day before we started we had been out in the morning, and after dinner I went up stairs to pack the last articles into our trunks; Estelle had remained in the parlor after dinner, and Harry stayed with her, to chat as usual, I thought, for a few moments before returning to

the office. I had finished my packing, and was sitting quietly in the gloaming busy with my own thoughts, when the door was opened hastily, and Estelle sprung into the room, clasped her arms around me, and buried her face in my lap as she knelt before me, trembling like an aspen.

I guessed the cause of her agitation, and though I had been pleased when the idea first came to me, now as a reality, it struck a sharp pain through my heart—was I to lose my darling so soon after all?

But I stifled the pain, and bending down over her, said:

'What is the matter, Estelle, what has happened?'

'O, aunt, he says he love me he—'

She buried her face again in my lap and did not finish her sentence.

I raised her up in my arms and kissed her, and then we two women alone there in the dark had a good cry together and felt very much better for it.

So my darling found her life's happiness: while I, after just gaining full possession of her, was to lose her altogether. And I wondered if the new love would be as tender and as supporting as the old. It ought to be I knew, if it was a true marriage, but how few are!

The next morning we left. Mrs. Percival took Estelle in her arms and called her her dear daughter in parting, and Harry of course drove out with us to the West Philadelphia depot; but when the cars started he still remained, and then told us he was going as far as Harrisburg. Estelle's face cleared up like an April day at this, the clouds were all put away for the present.—But the parting time had to come, and at Harrisburg, after attending to all our wants and being assured that we needed nothing more, Harry was obliged to tear himself away. Estelle drew her veil closely over her face and indulged her feelings for the next few miles and I drew myself up into the corner of the seat, took out my rosary intending to say it, but instead I fell into a train of anxious thought, and the beads lay untold in my hand.

This discovery and declaration of these two children's feelings had come so suddenly and at such an inopportune moment for any common sense arrangements that we elders had not had a word to say. As I sat there in the cars, and looked out at the mountains with their summits covered with snow, I went over all the pros and cons of the case.

Harry Percival was a Protestant, and though I knew him to be a member of no congregation, his mother was a strict Episcopalian, and from what I gathered in conversation, very much prejudiced against the Church. Had he been imbued with her prejudices against it without her belief in another religion, or would she influence him to refuse Estelle the privileges she would claim? And Estelle? had she thought of all these things or had she been so blinded by her love as to pay no attention to them?

What a strange thing this blind hatred to the very name of Catholic that animates all Protestants. I cannot understand it. They know little or nothing about us, never read anything that can enlighten them, but eagerly peruse and believe every calumny that is noised about. People who are intelligent and cultivated, and would be ashamed to be as ignorant on other subjects as they are on this, yet do not hesitate to display an utter want of knowledge of the first principles and teachings of our Faith, and seem to take delight in showing it!

At this point of my meditations, Estelle slipped her hand into mine and throwing back her veil showed me a face on which tears and smiles were struggling for the mastery.

I gave her hand a sympathizing squeeze and then remembering my rosary, turned to my neglected devotions and strove for a while to keep earthly loves and hopes out of my mind, except that I breathed a short but fervent prayer for my darling's happiness.

The journey was safely accomplished and in due time we arrived in Cincinnati, and met a warm Western greeting from our friends there.

I was obliged to go out to the farm as soon as I arrived, but I suggested to Estelle to remain in the city, and I would soon return and we would spend the rest of the winter there as usual.

This was not at all desirable, Estelle thought; she much preferred going with me and remaining there all winter; she did not care for society, she said, and would not go with it if she stayed in Cincinnati all the year. Nothing loath, I agreed to this arrangement. The rest of the winter passed in external quiet.

CHAPTER VI.

Of course the lovers wrote to each other constantly, and Mrs. Percival and I kept up quite a correspondence; it was not till a month or two had passed that the serious termination of the engagement was broached.

Harry of course wanted to be married in the Spring, he could see no sense in waiting longer,

but I felt my darling was too young yet to leave me, even if Harry had been older.

Twenty and sixteen I said was little better than childhood, and insulted as Master Harry might feel himself at the idea, I did not choose to give my child's happiness into a boy's keeping. They must wait three years, and to this fearful privation after a struggle, and finding Estelle agreed with me, he submitted, but with a very bad grace. Mrs. Percival said three years was not any too long, and Estelle, though she said it seemed a long time knew I was right.

In the next June Harry came out to see his betrothed, and for a few weeks Estelle's cup of happiness was full to the brim.

But gradually there came a cloud: they would wander for hours in the woods back of the house, and from one or two of these walks I noticed Harry returned ill at ease and Estelle's eyes showed marks of tears.

As she said nothing to me, I asked no questions, feeling perfectly satisfied that when the time came she would tell me all, nor was I mistaken.

One day, it was after Harry had been with us three weeks nearly, they had taken their usual walk, but I saw them returning much sooner than usual, and as I watched them from the library window, come slowly through the garden paths, I saw Harry stop and say something, but Estelle still hurried in, and presently she disappeared at the door.

Harry followed her, but as I looked closely at him, I saw he looked flushed and angry, and I still stood in the path and was talking to her, standing I supposed in the door, and I, thinking they had better settle it by themselves, slipped out of the library and up stairs to my own room.

In a few moments Estelle tapped at my door, and opening it without waiting for me to speak, said with forced composure:

'Harry wishes to bid you good-bye, auntie; he is going to start for home to-night.'

'Why, that is a sudden idea, isn't it, Estelle?' I asked.

'Yes,' she faltered, and I could see the struggle she made to keep calm. Yes, but don't keep him waiting he will hardly have time to get ready for the next omnibus.'

Then she crossed the hall to her own room, entered it, shut the door, and I heard the key turn.

With very painful feelings I went down to the parlor where Harry was pacing up and down like a caged tiger.

'Good bye, my dear Miss Felton,' he said holding out his hand. 'I have had a very pleasant—'

'Harry,' I interrupted him, 'you are not deceiving me, this sudden leave taking, means something more; have you and Estelle quarrelled?' 'Quarrelled! I would not quarrel with Estelle, Miss Felton.'

'Then, what is the meaning of this?'

'It means that Estelle has discovered that she can not trust her happiness to my keeping—'

'I would rather she would tell you herself, perhaps she can make you understand the matter, I confess I cannot.'

'I am very sorry for this, Harry!' I said. 'Thank you, my dear Miss Felton, and now good bye and God bless you.'

He touched my hand to his lips and was gone. Estelle did not leave her room the rest of the day, but at night she came to me as I sat where the calm moonlight streamed through the open windows, and the night air was scented with the perfume of the favorite jessamine.

She came creeping down to me in her white muslin wrapper, and as she had done once before in her life, clasped me tight in her arms and hid her face in my lap as she knelt before me.

Then she told me all about it.

They had had several serious talks about the future, and she found Harry very bitter in his religious prejudices; these she tried to combat, but found at length she could not, and he even went as far as to say that no wife of his should ever 'practise any of the mummeries of the papist's faith.'

'I found, aunt,' said my poor darling, 'that I must give up either my religion or my lover—oh help me to bear it, aunt, help me to bear it!'

'My poor darling, my dear, dear child?' was all I said, but I drew her up to me and held her tight.

The next day I was obliged to visit the city, and when I was ready to start Estelle came to me with a small package in her hand, and asked me to leave it at the express office. I took it without any question for I knew what it was.

'I hate to leave you all alone, my darling, suppose you go with me?'

She shook her head. 'No, aunt, I'd rather be alone, indeed; if you won't mind my saying so, it is a relief to me that you are going.'

I kissed her and left her. When I came home in the evening, she met me with an attempt