

Drifting Apart.

Out of sight of the heated land, Over the breezy sea; Into the reach of the solemn mist, Quietly drifted we.

The sky was blue as the baby's eye When it falleth apart in sleep, And soft as the touch of its wandering hand The swell of the peaceful deep.

Hovered all day in our sluggish wake The wonderful petrel's wing— Following, following, ever afar, Like the love of a human thing.

The day crept out at the purple west, Dowered with glories rare; Never a sight and never a sound To startle the dreamy air.

The mist behind and the mist before, But light in the purple west, Until we wearied to turn aside And drift to its haunted rest.

But the mist was behind; and the mist before, Rose up, like a changeless fate; And we turned our faces towards the dark, And drearily said, "Too late!"

So, with foreheads fronting the far-off south, We drifted into the mist, Turning away from the glorious west's Purple and amethyst.

For the sea and the sky met everywhere Like the strength of an evil hate, And a thunder-cloud came out of the west, And guarded the sunset gate.

Thou art in the royal, radiant land That stretches across the sea, And the drifting hours of each weary day Take thee further from me!

SELECT STORY.

Lost and Found.

Chapter II. CONCLUDED.

She? To whom do you allude? Ellen looked up in surprise, My niece—your future— Oh! Your niece is also to be married when we are?

Sir! exclaimed Ellen, what do you mean? Are you jesting? Paul frowned. He disliked her, and detested her affection.

I understood you to say your niece intends to marry when we do. She sat gazing at him with wide extended eyes and mouth, until Paul had serious doubts of her sanity, and still more serious thoughts of leaving the room through the window.

At length she recovered from her astonishment sufficiently to say,— There must be a ludicrous mistake. Whom are you going to marry? Me? Whom but you am I to marry? asked Paul, turning very red as Ellen broke into a merry peal of irrepressible laughter.

Paul discovered and with a sense of relief, the state of affairs. What would my niece say if she knew that her future husband had—ha! ha! and her mirth broke forth again with redoubled violence. What would Colonel Melvill say if he were told that a handsome young man had really proposed to his future wife? with another burst of laughter.

Then, thought Paul, I am not to marry this Ellen, but another one whom I have not seen. After all, it is but jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire. Now, Paul, I'll be serious, said Ellen, suppressing her laughter. I have always wondered why you always avoided speaking my niece's name, and was so careless about seeing her. Now that we have discovered the mistake, you will go and see her, will you not?

Certainly, I adhere to resolution. Does she agree to the marriage? Yes. She did object, but has consented, knowing that a refusal would ruin her father.

May I enquire what those objections were? Tell me something about her? She took a silly notion, last summer, to teach school, and, while teaching, became acquainted with a young coxcomb from the city of H—, with a black moustache, white hands, stove-pipe hat, &c. He came to see her often.

And the consequence was— What might be expected of an inexperienced girl. She fell deeply in love with him, and he, thinking she was an heiress, asked her to be his wife.

And she accepted him? finished Paul intensely interested. No. Though it cost a great effort, she refused him.

That was a great sacrifice, and it is selfish in us to require it. Did you ever see her lover? No. He claimed to be a lawyer,

Ah, indeed! What was his name? inquired he, his face lighting up at the thought that perhaps it was he to whom she was alluding—that, after all, it was his peerless Ella that they wanted him to marry.

It was a very common name—Jones or Brown. I never cared enough to enquire particularly. Miss Reyndell, Paul leaned forward, at what place did your niece teach?

A few miles east of this town. And she boarded at— Bertram's. Why, Paul, what is the matter? You seem surprised. He was surprised. He could scarcely realize that it was true. And this was the cause of her refusing him! And she loved him! He had loved the girl they had been trying to make him marry all the time.

Where is Ella? I will go to her at once, he said, rising. And will you marry her? If she still retains the love for the lawyer from H—, whom, by the way, I am acquainted with, I think she had better marry him. I intend to use my influence in his behalf.

Paul! They looked each other full in the eyes, and both smiled. Well, didn't I flatter you a moment ago? Go to her at once. She is expecting Mr. Smith, the nephew of Jacob Smith, of the firm of Smith, Kellum, and Co., but I think that Mr. Smith, her city lover, will answer.

Paul found Ella alone. As he entered the room, she started up with an exclamation, Mr. Smith! You are surprised to see me. I have come to repeat the story of my love. A deep shade of pain swept over her face.

She said, coldly,— My mind is unchanged. I can never marry you. Do you love the man you are going to marry? Why do you ask? she said, evasively.

Because I have reason to believe otherwise. You have never seen him. It is seldom we place our affection on an unknown and unseen object. Ella, you love me.

I shall always regard you as a friend, nothing more. This interview is painful to us both, and must not be prolonged. Let us change the subject. One word more, and, if you desire it, the subject will be dropped forever. The name of the man you are going to marry is Smith, I believe. That is also my name.

She looked up wildly at him, and joy leaped athwart her face—joy born of hope—joy that irradiated and beautified every feature—and unconsciously her hands clasped his.

Can you learn to love me, Ella? he asked, with a smile that told her all. No, sir. And why? Because I already love you. Need I tell the sequel.

Phantom Fingers.

Chapter I.

HIS was a fanciful idea, without doubt; but as a bit of description in two words, it could not have been excelled. For his fingers were certainly phantom-like. At a piano their peculiar shadowy appearance came out more powerfully than anywhere else; the effect upon people who watched them corresponding. They seemed to flit about the white keys, much whiter than the ivory, indeed, and not to bring out the notes by striking, but by a weird, magnetic influence, that cannot be well by words described. So people looking on, and there were always many when he played, experienced first surprise, next interest, next a chilliness, and next horror.

In the end they trickled away, and ran into little pools elsewhere, and said, diffidently, what they thought about it. Odd! Never saw the like before! 'Pon my soul it made my flesh creep! etc., etc.

But Valerie's expression met the need precisely. She said, with a little turn up of her exquisitely pert nose, "Phantom fingers!" And henceforth Melchior Marek was known, behind his narrow back (where, however, he seemed to have eyes) by that name.

This, in the very beginning, makes him melodramatic; and I am sorry, because some do not like melodramatic stories, and so will drop mine at once; and because melodramatic heroes are usually noodles.

Herr Marek was pale, of course; had light, and rather cold blue eyes; a bad mouth; strong, white teeth; above them a nose inclining a little to be beakish. He was reserved; and there was in fact, a chill about him, and people drifted but little in his way, and he rarely talked. He professed that he could not; but his silence was evidently due more to a constitutional inertness and a contempt for conversation than any other motive.

It was profoundly calm that evening, or, rather, dreamy. The stillness with-

out seemed to have penetrated the very walls, the stillness of the meek stars, the bright moon, and the white snow. Everybody seemed to be talking in languid whispers, and even the fire in the grate diffused its grateful, gentle warmth, without noise. The red coals appeared to sleep.

Suddenly the door opened as if for a ghost. It was only old Captain Rothwell, trundling along by the aid of his great, creaking shoes—quite canoes—and his massive walking-stick, almost large enough to make a mast for a ship. For a sailor, he was by no means jovial—all they ill-naturedly said, had been taken out of him by his wife before she died—and so he sat down with a quiet bow, and fell into a study. The only other person in the room who had been enjoying his own society exclusively was Herr Marek. He had been softly humming to himself in the corner and twiddling those restless fingers; but now, at the appearance of the captain, he rose, and went over to him.

Why don't you play cards, Mr. Marek? asked the blunt officer, in a husky, hurricane kind of voice. Because I do not find myself able to fancy them, good captain. It is wasting brain, thought, diplomatic skill, and such good things, to no purpose. But I perceive your niece is fond of them.

Ay, ah! And also fond of a nice partner—(is nice the word I should use? I am clumsy at English epithets.) She always selects the best—Mr. Atherstone. The captain scowled. The German went on:

And how greatly they do enjoy themselves! It is really a pleasure for me to sit and look on and listen. Both so handsome and young, too! Ay, ay! growled the old sailor, dryly.

And youth, sir, is the foam of life. They are happy who have youth; I never had, I was born old and odd and wretched. These last words reached the sharp ears of Frederick Atherstone, who was at the card-table some yards off, and who had been casting uneasy glances at Herr Marek ever since he had left his seat.

Talking some of Goethe and Byron's nonsense to your uncle, said Fred to Valerie, shuffling his pack excitedly. And the old buffer swallowed every word. It provokes me, confound it!

Play, play! interrupted Mrs. Jorry, who hated to lose time over euchre. Play, Fred.

I can't, with my attention distracted there. The fact is, Valerie, your uncle is the most precious old pump I ever encountered—in all my life. Anything can be poked down his throat.

Valerie laid down her pencil, with which she had been keeping account of the games, and looked at Fred seriously. I have told you, Fred, that I really cannot allow you to speak in my presence so disrespectful of my uncle.

But he is an idiot—a confirmed idiot! For a man to have travelled as much as he has, and to have learned so little, is a shame! I hate such infernal stupidity, and such disgusting blockheads! They ought to be put out of the world! He had actually worked himself into a fierce passion. His cheeks were red, his eyes blazing, and his fists were clenched. Mrs. Jorry laughed; but Valerie rose.

You are mad, Mr. Atherstone. certainly, she said, in a very cold voice, and with much earnestness. I shall not listen to you any longer. Do not speak to me again, sir. She swept away with gentle dignity, and Fred, with a scowl, went over to the window, and hid himself in the folds of the curtain.

All of which Herr Marek had quietly observed. There, now! said he, compassionately. There we have another instance of what card-playing is! All our friends have quarrelled.

That's nothing, said the sailor. Quarrel about the like every day. Soon make it up, sir. Let me see, continued the German, appearing to examine more attentively. No, I was mistaken. It is only two of them who have quarrelled—your sweet niece, sir, and Mr. Frederick.

Captain Rothwell looked more interested. And so it cannot have been about the cards; it is more likely to have been a love-quarrel! Ha, ha, ha! This came out in a little burst of triumph. Herr Marek's laugh was a sort of internal cluck. —not precisely disagreeable, but singular. The captain's eyes began to dilate.

Impossible, Mr. Marek. There can be no such contention between my niece and Mr. Frederick Atherstone. You have mistaken the relations between them. Till I am in the ground, my niece will never be placed in circumstances to have a love-quarrel with anybody; and, sir, said the old man, earnestly, whether I am alive or dead, there shall never be anything of the love char-

acter between her and Mr. Frederick Atherstone. This method of formally repeating the young man's full name was certainly expressive. Herr Marek, who had lived in all countries, gave his shoulders a French shrug.

By this time all in the room were listening, except the subject of the conversation. I thought he was a most excellent gentleman. No doubt he is. True—perhaps nobody will deny it—it—he has a bad temper; that is to say, he is quick and terrible—fierce; but that is a common fault. I have also understood that he has a great faculty—what call you it?—for revenge.

So he has, chimed in Mrs. Jorry. His hate is terrible. I know as well as I sit here that Frederick Atherstone in a fury would do murder. Herr Marek was horrified. Nay, nay! That I cannot credit, madame.

Nor I, Herr Marek, said Valerie. I am angry with the hot-headed gentleman; but I shall say nothing against him behind his back; nor, if I can help it, allow anything to be said. Why are you his champion? asked Captain Rothwell, quickly.

I don't know why, she answered, a little confused; unless, perhaps, because he appears to have none. Herr Marek has uttered the only good word for him. I am really proud of that distinction. mademoiselle, answered the man of the slender white fingers. I do certainly greatly esteem our friend in the very core of my heart of hearts! This savage, bloodthirsty humor, which you all say he possesses, I deeply regret. And furthermore, it is not pleasant for me to reflect that there exists a belief, however wild and extravagant, that he would take life.

Why I have the notion, said the good-natured, empty-headed Mrs. Jorry is, because, in drawing a portrait one day, he fell into such a rage with his fingers, because they did not catch a certain shade, or something, that he got deliberately up, took his pocket-pistol, went into the corridor, and blew his forefinger half off.

This foolish speech, of course, created a sensation. The German looked much pained, Valerie started, the others deeply shocked; but old Captain Rothwell, resumed the unlucky narrator of the anecdote, possibly perceiving the effect of it, suppose we change the subject. It is too gloomy for me. Mr. Marek give us some music.

They pressed him, and he went over to the piano. He pushed up the stool with his knee, blew out a little puff of breath right and left, coughed slightly, and then suddenly produced his phantom fingers.

Somehow, he never played solemn pieces in minor keys, and so was never necessitated to strike long resounding chords. His hands, flitting here and there, never alighting, drew a bright, sweet symphony from the ivory, and put the spirit of real music into the auditors' souls on the very instant. His light introduction ended, he dashed with a brief preliminary pause, into the subject and he never failed to play on till every one had left his side.

This always occurred for the reason I have given—none could endure the chill of those horrible, ghostly fingers. Whatever he was executing, he mostly composed as he went along, and immediately forgot every note after he had plucked it out, it was beautiful; and Frederick Atherstone, to listen better, came out of his retreat in the window-curtains.

Naturally, and much to his amazement, everybody despite the music, cast a glance at his right hand. It was a broad, heavy fist, for he was a large, burly man; and there was confirmation; forefinger gone at the second joint. The music over, Frederick said: It is late, but I am going for a ride across the snow. I've been in a passion this evening, and I wish to get thoroughly cooled off.

Ring for your horse, Mr. Atherstone, said Valerie. Perhaps this was to make it up with him. Thanks; but no, he answered, bursting into a bright smile at her. My greatcoat is in the stable, and I shall have to walk across anyhow.

And, cried Herr Marek, rising quickly, and in a tone of remorse, my poor dog! sweet Atous! named after the once celebrated Mr. Brummel's dog. I must get the poor thing, or I shall have no company in my room to-night—and it will die of the cold. Poor, poor Atous! let me instantly rush to thy rescue! Mr. Frederick, I will order your horse, and bring him and the overcoat across, myself.

He darted from the room precipitately. In ten minutes he was back, sitting on the horse, and carrying his dog. He dismounted and gave place to Frederick

We were all, except the captain, standing in the doorway. No sooner had Frederick put on his coat, than he began with much concern to search his pockets. It was a fruitless investigation.

Confound it! he burst out. I've lost something! And he dashed madly into the darkness.

Chapter II.

HERR MARCK became melancholy. He wandered about the house and grounds for hours together. His piano was silent, his fingers concealed themselves in the darkness of his pockets.

Frederick Atherstone noticed these things, and went to him. What's the matter, Marek? I cannot tell, I am gloomy. I have the blues.

It must be one of two troubles, love or money. The German laughed. How well you know the world! It is money. I will tell you all, because I know you can keep a secret. You saw the foreign letter I received the other day? Well that was from a friend in Weimer, my bosom friend, my Pythias! I love him beyond life itself. He writes me for money to pay a most particular debt, and I have not one penny to give him; is not this hard?

Rather, yawned Fred, who was disappointed in Herr Marek's story. But can't you borrow what you want? From whom, unless yourself?

My dear fellow, you can't from me, for one good reason; practically, I have none. You won't believe it, perhaps, but I'm not yet of age; shan't be till next June; and, consequently, I can't put my hands on a single cent till that time arrives.

Herr Marek grew very down hearted indeed. I don't know what to do then! Don't despair, at any rate. Try old Timbertoes. He has plenty, and might accommodate, on great persuasion.

You mean the good Captain Rothwell, Ah, you don't like him! You hate him—don't you? Well we all have peculiar fancies. Is he very wealthy?

Enormously! said Fred. He even has great lots in his bedroom. Miserly, you see, I advise a trial, Marek. Thanks, thanks, It's but a faint hope; but a hope at least.

Now, Frederick that day had determined to put a question to Captain Rothwell, too. He had resolved to ask for the hand of Valerie, and he immediately reflected that it would be a matter of prudence to get in advance of the German. If two favors are asked in one day, the first is, of course, the one the more likely to be granted.

Frederick encountered the old sailor prowling about the hothouse. It was a good day, the snow was nearly gone, and he was airing his rheumatic legs, Fred had determined to be humble and temperate. He approached, gravely. Captain Rothwell, you are at leisure, I perceive. May I speak with you five minutes?

I am at your service, Mr. Atherstone, was the answer, cold and dignified. You will listen patiently till I have done, I love your niece. I should like your permission to marry her.

He had not an opportunity to make his sentence longer. The captain swung himself round, clenched his fists, growled as blood in the face, and shrieked: Stop, you— Frederick stopped him. You gave me your word to hear me out.

He then proceeded to run through quickly all the arguments he had previously arranged to offer. But it was language—and rather dramatic language, for who could have helped that?—perfectly wasted.

(CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.)

THE STAR

AND CONCEPTION BAY SEMI-WEEKLY ADVERTISER,

Is printed and published by the Proprietors, ALEXANDER A. PARSONS and WILLIAM R. SQUIRE, at their Office, (opposite the premises of Capt. D. Green, Water Street, Harbor Grace, Newfoundland.

Book and Job Printing executed in a manner calculated to afford the utmost satisfaction. Price of Subscription—THREE DOLLARS per annum, payable half-yearly.

Advertisements inserted on the most liberal terms, viz. —Per square of seven lines, for first insertion, \$1; each continuation 25 cents.

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