

PEACHES.

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An orchard climbing up a steep hill-side, and hanging like a swallow's nest amid its fragrant bowers of pearl and rose, an old brick farmhouse mellow in hue as a golden pear with all the sunshine it had bathed in during many and many a summer.

At the foot of the hill a lordly grove of rustling maples "hidden to the knees in fern," a river flowing to the sea, and on the river the white wings of fairy fleets and the jetty smoke of great steamers.

Under a peach-tree, white, in a wedding garment of bloom, a girl feeding pigeons.

Up the orchard path, an enchanted roadway of incense and bloom domed with the high-lifted sapphire of a May sky, came a young man towards where the pigeons were cooling, fluttering, wheeling round the girl's head as, like some rural Divinity, she scattered them golden grain.

The young man is Hugh Penrith, an architect and engineer; and the girl is—my heroine.

Hugh looked at his charming heroine who looked at him, a white pigeon poised on her pretty shoulder and her arch eyes brilliant as oriental amethysts in the pearly shadows of the peach-tree.

Hugh has since declared to me that the first glance of the orbs prostrated him mentally as a ball from a rifle in the hands of one of our "Canadian Team" would have done physically, and for the first time in his life my dear friend felt a violet-like sentiment of modesty upon his soul.

He blushed (yes! he asked me to credit that), stared, and was dumb.

"Good evening," said the Divinity, in the Dolly Varden chintz, cultivating a maddening dimple at the corner of each roseate lip. "You wish to see grandmamma, I suppose?"

"Ah—yes, if you please," said Hugh, gathering himself up (mentally), and whistling off his Panama with a bow worthy of Prince De Tallyrand. "Miss—ah—b—"

"Mrs. Lawrence," corrected the Divinity, a flying squadron of dimples, bannered by a blush sweeping across that face. "Mr. Penrith, I presume?"

Hugh bowed and was lowered instantly into a coal-mine uncounted fathoms deep, from which, however, he re-ascended as speedily as he remembered that Mr. Lawrence had some two years before retired to the elegant privacy of a fashionable place of sepulture near Montreal, in the sunshine of which lucky memory he blossomed immediately into his full glory.

He ran his fingers through his brown curls, pulled his whiskers and threw out that chest of his (my Hugh is a blond young Achilles), and as they walked up the remainder of the enchanted roadway to the house, the head of the Divinity, an Ary Scheffer-like creation, was just on a level with his shoulder.

How pretty she was, how sweet, how graceful! What ripples of silver stirred the canopy of peach-blossoms when she laughed, what quivering rose tints died and were born in those lucid cheeks! What arch lights made themselves arrows in those eyes and were planted in Hugh's manly bosom.

"A flight of fairy arrows aim'd
All at one mark, all hitting."

by that arch deceiver, with the wings and the bandage over his baby eyes, an arrant young knave, that same Cupid who leaves a hole in the bandage to spy through.

"Grannie expects you," said the Divinity. "Your mamma was an old and dear friend of hers, she tells me."

Hugh was coming to spend the long summer there with a letter of introduction in his pocket and a porte-manteau full of plans for a new bridge near by, which he was to superintend.

Grannie proved to be a most bewitching old lady with soft curls of silver framing her sweet face, and eyes bright with a certain glory which had its birth beyond the stars.

Before Hugh went to bed in a room over the orchard, he was conscious of two things, firstly, that the late Mr. Lawrence had shown himself a man of equal discernment and good-nature by retiring to the seclusion remotely referred to before in the family vault, and secondly, that he (Hugh) shouldn't care in the least how soon old Charon brought his ferry round to paddle him over the Styx if Rowena, that was the name of the Divinity, proved ruthless and placed her dainty slipper on the delicate bud of his young affections.

He fell asleep with the incense of the peach-orchard swaying round him, and dreamt that he and Rowena were rushing through space on a thousand horse-power engine decorated with garlands of peach-blossoms to spend their honeymoon on the glittering shore of radiant Hesperus.

I am in the office of Hugh's "chief," and when that estimable old gentleman turned back in the face one fine day with rage, and handed me over one of Hugh's business letters, with a margin devoted to portraits of Mrs. Rowena crowned with roses, and asked me if I knew what young woman with snub noses (he called that nose, "up-lifted like the petal of a flower," a "snub") had to do with engineers?

I felt called upon to reply meekly, (I am not rich my friends) that as engineers indubitably nothing, but as men perhaps a great deal.

He looked thoughtfully over this and said:

"Hah! hum! Perhaps such may be the case, Mr. Compass. I have heard that young men are addicted to sentiments other than professional. I never was myself. Scratch out the young woman's face and docket the letter, if you please."

I scratched out Rowena's charming little phiz with rose-colored ink and a gold pen, and felt that my poor Hugh was up to his ears in that ambrosial quagmire, yelpet love; and the next letter I had from him, *parole d'honneur*, it was early in July, they were engaged.

It was a chilly evening about the end of September, and Rowena wrapped up in the reddest of shawls, tripped down the maple-shaded sidewalk of the village to do an errand for grannie at the store. The moon was doing a fine illuminating business, just coming over the hill with a pink mist rolled round her golden head, and though the leaves of the maples were rustling in an aerial ocean of her bounteous silver largesse, beneath them on the sidewalk it was as dark as need be.

Rowena was a shade pensive. Hugh had not been near her all day, and what woman, except perhaps a female lawyer, (only perhaps, remember) does not resent her lover being able to exist twenty-four hours, if within reasonable distance, without sunning himself in her eyes?

Rowena sighed, and this and a pair of the neatest kid "bottines" you ever beheld brought her opposite the village hotel, an arched looking building tricked out in a vast hop-vine, and standing like a hermit in a hollow square of poplars pointing great spires of verdant foliage to the rolling globes of gold twinkling above.

There was a bright light in the hotel parlor, and as Rowena tripped past she looked in mechanically over the snowy muslin blind and instantly stood still as white as any little ghost that ever flitted through a churchyard, her eyes fixed on the snug parlor and on the *tableau vivant* therein displayed.

There was Hugh standing in the full light, looking distractingly handsome, and with his faithless right arm round the little waist of a lovely woman, a fair-faced Juno, crowned with glistening golden hair, and into whose upraised eyes he was looking down with the most pronounced tenderness, and as Rowena looked he bent and kissed the plump cheek more than once.

Alackaday! here was a pretty affair. Rowena's cheeks blossomed like roses, her eyes opened wide and sparkled, finely her little figure straightened like an arrow, and presently she marched into grannie's with her head in the air, and was so gay in her talk and laughter, that grannie never noticed that the pretty little engagement ring, a sapphire set in a circle of pearls, was not on her finger, and that once or twice the corner of her sweet lips quivered, but not with a smile.

Next morning Mr. Hugh had a pleasant surprise when he was handed a neat little package containing the ring, his own vignette, and two or three little billets he had written to Rowena, tied all together with a knot of carnation ribbon, and on it pinned a slip of paper with this legend written on it:

"I saw you last night with her. It is all over between us. I never wish to see you again.
Good-bye.
R. L."

Hugh was too honest-hearted a man, too sincere and whole-souled to experience that ecstatic joy which frequently possesses the masculine mind when its owner has succeeded in rendering the woman who loves him as miserable as only a jealous and loving woman can be.

He said "Confound it! here's a pretty business!" and instead of laughing in his heart at poor little Rowena's jealousy, as would have become a man of the world, he tore up through the nodding maples and crisp ferns as though he had come in for the seven-league boots and was going to run a race in them with the slim young god with the winged heels.

The red September sun was playing finely over the old house and a crisp wind coquetted with the Tyrian splendors of the Virginia creeper running up to the very eaves, as Hugh stalked up under the bare peach-trees beneath which in their spring glories he had first seen Rowena, and dear old grannie was visible on the veranda trotting about amongst her flower-stands, but no golden head caught the sun, and no sweet eyes sparkled and drooped as Hugh looked eagerly about him.

An aromatic perfume, warm and ambrosial as might have issued from the *cuisine* of the Olympian Dieties where the nectar was brewed, stole out on the air from the open kitchen window, in sudden puffs and honeyed gusts.

Had Hugh been gifted with the valuable accomplishment of being able to see round a corner, he might have seen in that kitchen a woe-begone little face flushed feverishly, as its owner sat by a great basket of peaches under the open window, the sunlight playing as many tricks through the haunting vine leaves as a kitter, while her nimble white fingers quartered the blushing fruit, and her sad little heart was trying to push his own image out of its golden door, and from the shrine in that little temple in which he had sat secure.

But as Hugh could not see round a corner he marched up to grannie, looking quite ferocious, his handsome eyes as dark as thunder clouds, and his fine lips set in a rigid line, for by this time he was very angry, and in that mood when men rush off to the North Pole or to the interior of

Africa, to get away from a haunting face that yet flits before them on the driving surf or floats in the tropic haze and will not be forgotten or left behind.

That Rowena, whom he loved—and how much that means with a man like Hugh—could imagine him false, was as grievous a blow as could well have struck him, and, like many a wiser man, for once in his life he did a very foolish thing. He became uncontrollably angry.

He was a perfect gentleman, indeed had he been a scavenger there was a certain innate chivalry and kindliness about him that would have shown brightly through the mud, and his low voice was gentle as usual as he poured out his wrongs to sympathetic little grannie, and wound up with what the papers style "a glowing peroration."

"I won't explain," he declared, "if Rowena does not trust me so far as to believe that I meant her no wrong, it is better that we should part. Why, grannie, if all the world pronounced her as false as hell, if she looked in my eyes and said, 'Hugh, I am true to you and I love you with all my heart,' I would believe her."

Grannie could only cry a little at this, and entreat him to explain, as she was confident that Rowena was breaking her heart about the matter, "and remember, my dear," she said with simple eloquence, "that you love each other, and that love is as sharp to wound as hate, and leaves a far, far deeper scar."

But Hugh had mounted so very lofty a charger of dignity that he was deaf to grannie's charming voice, and got up from the rustic bench beside her with an air of haughty misery.

"Good-bye," he said taking her handsome old hand and kissing it, for he had become very much attached to this lady, who was only Rowena grown old. "I shall leave Canada for ever next week. I could not breathe the air with Rowena whom I love and who cannot trust me."

There is very little doubt that Hugh meant what he said, and that at this moment his scalp might have been decking the belt of some amiable chieftain on the Rocky Mountains had not that saying been written to last through time and eternity, "*L'homme propose et Dieu dispose*."

A sudden scream, shrill and piercing with bodily anguish, followed by another and another, and coming from the summer kitchen, smote the air, and Hugh's heart leaped to his throat. Grannie rose trembling, and crying out "Rowena!" sank down again and cried out to Hugh "go to her."

Hugh hurried himself round the corner and met flying towards him a little figure lapped about in golden flames, waving above the bright head in cruel, graceful, slender tongues, and whirling and writhing into the crisp air.

He opened his arms and caught her, crushing the flames down, and yet blinded and cruelly scorched by them as he sprung towards an open cistern, which he remembered mechanically.

It was full, thanks to the autumn rains, and in a second he had plunged with her into it.

By every rule of romance the cistern ought to have been a river, and Hugh ought to have laid Rowena dripping on the grass, pressed a frantic kiss on her brow and departed by express train for the Rocky Mountains.

He did nothing of the kind. He dashed her out of the cistern, and when he saw what the flames had done to the pretty white neck, the dimpled arms and the poor little hands, he forgot that one side of his own face was cruelly scorched, and his arms literally masses of raw, hideous blisters; he forgot everything but the fact that she still lived and breathed faintly, and that he had saved her.

Six weeks later Rowena, with a faint pink beginning to dawn coolly in her white little face, lay on a sofa drawn before the fire, which was winking ruddily through the dusk at the little tea-table set out with gay old china and a huge silver teapot that had seen a great deal of life during its eighty years connection with the family. Hugh, both his arms bound and bandaged yet, sat on a footstool beside the sofa, and grannie was away in the buttery, where she had the good taste to remain for a considerable time.

Rowena has one arm round Hugh's neck, and what do you suppose she is saying to him as she smooths his scarred cheek tenderly?

"Hugh, darling, won't you tell me who she is?"

"Who, my precious girl?" says Hugh, who has quite forgotten the little misunderstanding which had nearly resulted in the Rocky Mountains.

"The lady in the hotel parlor, dearest," says Rowena, and has the grace to blush.

Hugh looks comically round at her. "I can't encourage my future wife in jealousy," he says, shaking his head, and Rowena cries out with tears in her eyes.

"Hugh, you know there never was a less jealous woman than I am."

Hugh looks at one of the little fingers, on which his sapphire ring is sparkling in the firelight, and laughs as he answers.

"She is my sister Bertha, who was passing through the village with her husband, in such haste that I had not time to introduce her to you."

"Oh!" says Rowena, with a sigh of perfect content, "but please don't call me jealous, Hugh, because you know I am not anything of the kind."

Hugh hides a laugh by stooping and kissing the hand that wears his ring, and thinks that after all perhaps a wife entirely without that falling would not suit him as well as one with an aromatic dash of it through her sunny little heart.

"Fray, what have peaches to do with all this nonsense, may I ask?"

Well perhaps not much. They met under the

peach blossoms, and Hugh thinks that except for that peach preserve attending to which Rowena's dress took fire, she might never have stood beside him crowned with a rosy coronal of the same rich bloom, while she slipped on the third finger of her left hand a plain gold ring, with the sapphire set with pearls to guard it.

That is the reason I call this humble tale "peaches," and as that delectable fruit has a kernel, so this has a moral which you are heartily welcome to if you can find it.

HOW IT WORKED WITH GRIPPS.

Jenner Grippe was a man of brains, so he said. He was also an apostle of medicine, and a human benefactor; he also said this of himself. But at all events, Grippe was a wide-awake man, and by careful attention to business he had accumulated quite a fortune.

This business, by the way, was advertising a great medical discovery of his, a compound that went far ahead of the renowned "Pokeberry Extract," and was warranted (in his advertisements) to cure everything, from a parched corn to the most hopeless case of consumption.

And yet in spite of this remarkable medicine, the death rate ran about as high as before, and the human flesh seemed subject to quite as many ills as ever it was. According to Dr. Grippe, this was owing to the fact of the people refusing to buy his medicine, or of not taking enough of it when they started with it to save their lives.

But as the fools are not all dead, or because the new crop is quite as numerous as the old one was, Grippe succeeded, by dint of extensive advertising, in getting rid of quite a large quantity of his stuff, and got quite rich at the business. It don't matter much how worthless a thing you have to sell if you advertise it well, you can sell it.

One day a long, lanky fellow shuffled into his office in search of a job. He didn't care much what it was, or what he was paid for it: his greatest ambition was to get a job.

Grippe was instantly taken with the greenhorn; that is to say, he liked his ideas regarding wages, and he had always wanted a man to experiment on—somebody he could thoroughly impress with his greatness and importance—somebody he could bestow good advice upon, and show them how he made his mark in the world.

So the countryman was hired for general utility. Daniel, that was his front name, came the next day and began to work. Grippe also began on him, giving him all sorts of smart maxims to spur him on; and, above all things, informing him that enterprise was what he wanted—what every man wanted in this world, and that it was the exercise of this God-like attribute that made him what he was.

Things went on for about a week, and Daniel found himself almost exhausted by struggling with the old man's maxims; but still he toiled patiently on. Sometimes bottling the "Life Breeding Elixir," or washing bottles, and sometimes posting bills. In fact, this latter branch of the business occupied the most of his time; for the doctor showed him how handy it was to take a paste pot and brush, and a lot of bills with him as he went home at night, and put them up wherever he saw a chance. He also convinced him how enterprising it was.

But, somehow or other, Daniel showed mere chances for improvement than the old man could attend to, and do everything else. He was altogether too honest, and so far as posting bills was concerned, he was too timid to make half a show. He was soft and honest enough to respect the bills of other people, and avoid places where it said "Post no Bills."

To this weakness the old man directed his best efforts, for it affected him the most nearly. One day he got in a large lot of very large, showy posters, on which "Dr. Jenner Grippe's Life Breeding Elixir" was printed in flaming type. These bills must be thoroughly posted, so he took Dan in hand.

"You must have more cheek, or I must have a man in your place. Timidity may do very well in the country, but it will ruin a man in London. Now, I want you to take a lot of these posters and post them. Understand? Slip 'em up everywhere—over anybody's, on anybody's fence or house—what's the odds? The more audacity you display, the better the bills will show off, the more excitement they will create, and the more Elixir will be sold. Be enterprising, be cheeky. Go over to the West End, go out into some of the broadest streets. If you find a space, slap 'em up. Go to-night; paste one on every vacant spot you can find, on every vacant house. Be enterprising, be bold. I'll back you in it, so don't be afraid. Follow my instructions, and I'll make a rich man of you yet. Understand?"

Dan thought he did, and he resolved to follow out his instructions to the letter. So he took about a thousand bills, a paste bucket and brush, and started. He struck out for the West End, and whenever he found a space that nobody was watching, he "slap 'em up."

About midnight he came across a new house, as yet unoccupied, although evidently already to be. There was no light to be seen, and so he began on the newly painted fence that surrounded it. He went over the fence regardless of cost. Then he went for the house. He pe-