

A SECRET VOW

(An Original Story.)

The last rays of the setting sun shone into a richly decorated chamber. In Pine Villa, and rested on the weary and sorrowful face of a man who had seen about two and forty winters come and go.

This man was Sir Arthur Deane, and by his side sat his fair daughter Mabel. Her hair was golden, falling in long ringlets over her shoulders, while about her lips played an angelic smile, on which both joy and sorrow were strangely mingled. She was looking away, and she fully realized the awful feeling of being alone in the world without either parent.

"Mabel!" How that word sounded faintly through the still room. "Yes, father! What is it?" "Draw your chair nearer the bed, for I feel that I must speak to you while I have yet the strength." He sighed, and Mabel obeyed, with the tears dimming her beautiful eyes. "Now, Mabel, my darling! Give me your hand—there—there will do, Mabel, kiss me before I begin." The very touch of those pure lips of yours seem to give strength to my lips to utter what I cannot.

"Father, begin, or you will not be able, as your strength even now is nearly exhausted."

"You are right, my darling Mabel. It will take all my strength to tell you what I loathe. Yes, yes! The very thought makes my heart ache. Listen to all I must say, and for God's sake do not despise your poor old father for his weakness."

"Years, years ago, when I was but a boy, I had a very dear friend, a boy of about my own age. His name was Austin Reynolds. We loved each other very dearly. Oh, so dearly that we could not bear to think of the day when we had to part, each to go his own path through life. We were separated through our school days in Dublin. But one day, when I was yet only twenty, years old, a telegram came to me, saying my father was very ill, and I must hasten to Pine Villa."

"When I arrived home, the house was all stillness, for grim death had come and claimed my father. I met my dear mother, and she seemed to overcome by grief, so for her sake I determined to be brave. I suppressed every sorrow in her presence, and said everything in my power to avert other thoughts, but of no use."

"After my father's remains were laid in the family vault and all affairs settled, I found that our estate was heavily encumbered, but still I was bothered by my mother with the knowledge of these facts. Everything was done for my dear mother, but of no use. I saw clearly her life was drawing to a close, so I hastened for confession, Father La Marie. This holy man came, did all in his power for her spiritual welfare, gave her the last rites of the Church and then withdrew. After he had gone a sad expression settled on her face, and early the next morning her soul passed from this world before her heavenly Judge. Her last words were: 'Oh, Sacred Heart, have pity on me!'"

A sad expression settled on the father's brow, and Mabel, seeing he was getting weak, left his side and went to a small table at the farther end of the room and poured out a glass of wine. Returning, she handed the glass to her father with these words: 'Dearest father, drink this—it will restore your strength.' Her father cupped the wine, then handed back the glass.

"Mabel," he said, "for your sake I must proceed."

"After my mother's death, I received a letter from my friend Sir Austin Reynolds asking me to go and spend a few weeks with him. He had been married scarcely a year. His home was all happiness, for he was married with a loving wife and darling son, whom he called Frederick. His invitation was so pressing, and my grief so heavy, since I had in little better than a year lost both my parents—that I thought to be with the dearest friend I now had on earth and a change of scene would do me good, so I accepted his invitation."

"Early one fine morning, when the whole earth was robed in her green

mantle and all nature was 'beauty' in itself, I set off for the station. We arrived in due time. The trip on the train gave me time to study my future, for I knew that the estates which were then mine were heavily in debt."

"While I was in the midst of my reverie, the conductor called out 'Campton Station' I at once arose, and, taking my hat and coat, the next moment saw me standing on the platform of the station. Just then a man tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I were Sir Arthur Deane. I bowed assent. He got my luggage and soon we were on our way to 'Greenwoods.'"

"When I arrived, I was received with a hearty welcome from Sir Austin Reynolds and his wife. Oh, Mabel! It was like a new life to me. I seemed to forget my past troubles and enter into the life of my faithful friends. When I was at 'Greenwoods' only a week, there came a fair-haired graceful girl—the daughter of Captain Ashley—to spend her summer vacation. When first I saw fair Alice Ashley my whole heart went out to her. Well, Mabel, there is no use delaying over this, for you know I married Miss Ashley, and she became your mother, but died only a few days after your birth. A low moan seemed to force itself from Mabel's lips, but still she listened.

"Mabel! I must make haste. I am wasting my time and wearing myself out!"

"When Austin had been married about five years and his little Fred had then seen four fair summers, a terrible disease, 'The Yellow Fever,' raged in the district of Greenwoods. Austin fell a prey to the plague and his beautiful wife was taken from him. Then he was taken ill himself, and it was when his doctors told him he could not live, that he thought of settling his business. He sent for me and made me guardian of his son. He had £100,000 in money and this he gave into my keeping to place it in some bank and leave it to accumulate until his son should become of age and inherit Greenwoods. Two days after these arrangements God called him from the world of men. Then I returned home, bringing with me little Fred. I did all I could to make him happy. But what did I do with the money? As I told you before my estates were heavily in debt, so I took the £100,000 and paid off my debts, thinking I should have accumulated it again before Fred should be of age. But business failed me, and now on my death-bed I find myself no better off. Oh, Mabel, Mabel! I cannot pay back this money, but you, and you alone, can cancel this debt!"

"How, father?"

"Listen, Mabel, while I tell you. Fred loves you. Yes, my darling, he has told me so, and asked me for your hand in marriage. If you will consent, Mabel, you shall have the estates between you, and Fred will never know about the £100,000. Oh, Mabel! Promise me you will become the wife of Fred."

Mabel sat staring at her father, completely overpowered. All was dead stillness until her father raised his head and said: "My darling daughter, do you loathe me for my sin? Speak—Mabel—speak!" Mabel could only fall on her dying father's bosom and weep.

After the lapse of some minutes, Mabel controlled herself. She sat up and said: "Father, I am so glad you told me all. We can arrange matters now and Fred shall have his own, and you can die happy."

"Thank God!" murmured her father.

"Listen, father, to your own Mabel. Would you not like to know on your death-bed, what your daughter's future career must be?"

"Oh, Mabel, I can die happy, if I only knew you future lifetime was happily provided for."

"Father, I ask of you only one request, and I hope you will not refuse my only child."

"Anything, anything. I shall grant to you if it will make you happy."

"Oh, father! How happy those words make me. But I must tell you, father, I can never become the wife of Fred Reynolds."

At those words escaped the lips of Mabel Sir Arthur Deane started, a

deathly pallor settled on his face, and a groan escaped his lips. He recovered himself and looking into his daughter's dewy eyes almost groaned the words: "Spare me, oh, my darling daughter, for whom I would sacrifice my very life, have pity on me, and do not let me die in debt, in sin!"

Mabel raised her father's wasted hand to her lips and kissed it, almost passionately. Then she said: "Father, let me tell you of a long-cherished thought of mine. Do you remember the summer we visited France, and the three weeks we stayed in Paris?"

"Yes, darling, I remember."

"Well, during our stay there, I visited the convent, and, oh, the very air of that holy place seemed to give me a new strength. The whole place had such a quiet, sanctified air about it, and the kind, modest nuns gained my heart, and when we were leaving I took a solemn vow that I would join these holy nuns and devote my life to the service of God. But, father, I loved you so dearly I could not leave you in your old days alone in the world without a wife or another child to comfort you. Father, I love Fred as I would love my own brother, and am so glad your have told me all I am sorry I shall grieve him, but—"

Mabel hesitated. Then she said: "Father, will you not settle your affairs before you get any weaker?"

"What shall I do, Mabel?" answered her father.

"I will go and send John, the footman, to the town for the lawyer, Mr. Lindsay, and with these words Mabel stooped and kissed her father's white forehead, and then withdrew.

About eight o'clock that evening the lawyer was ushered into Sir Arthur Deane's chamber, where no time was wasted in doing justice to Frederick Reynolds. It was found that the estate should bring about £200,000, of which £150,000 should go to Fred, £25,000 to Mabel, small legacies to the servants and the residue to charitable institutions.

After the lawyer had taken his leave, Mabel slipped into her father's room and asked him if she should send for good Father La Marie (now a very old man). Her father's look full of joy and hope was enough to convince Mabel that her father wished to see the holy man.

Father La Marie soon sought the bedside of his dying friend, and after Sir Arthur Deane poured out his heart to his confessor, a heavenly smile seemed to settle on his face. The good father knew that his life was drawing to a close, so Mabel and Fred were summoned. Mabel stole to her father's bedside, and took his hand in hers. Slowly he opened his glassy eyes, and for one moment they rested on the sorrowful eyes of his daughter. With these words, "Thank God; thank God! I die happy!" his spirit passed away.

Mabel fully realized now that she was alone in the world. The whole shock broke upon her at once, and with a low moan she fell prostrate to the floor. In a moment Fred was by her side, and with the help of a servant, carried her to her own room, where she lay half unconscious for two days.

After the remains of Sir Arthur Deane were placed in the family vault, and the will read, Mabel went to Fred, and asked him if he would remain at 'Pine Villa' until all business was settled. "Fred," she said, "I leave on Monday for Paris, where I intend to enter a convent in about another month and devote the remainder of my life to the service of God."

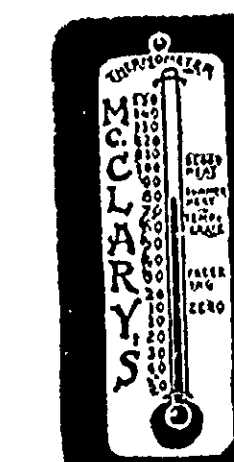
Fred stood as one in a trance. Then collecting himself, he said: "Mabel, forgive me, but I must tell you I love you! Oh! Mabel, I love you!"

Mabel stood with tears in her eyes. Then she said: "Fred, we shall still be as a brother and sister."

"Oh! Mabel, I read your heart! You are a noble woman, but I must sacrifice my love for your happiness. We must part now, forever. Farewell, Mabel, farewell!" And he stooped and kissed her snowy hand.

Early the next Tuesday morning, Mabel was ushered into the convent parlor, and a month later she received her first vows, and started on her duties and work for God. Now you may see the happy face of good Sister Mary Cecilia moving about the hospital, her kind hand administering to the wounded and weak, and her low, soft voice comforting many a repenting sinner on his death-bed.

In a little country parish is a Rev. Father Fred. Reynolds, loved



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by all the young, and the pride of the elders of the parish. Oh, how many pious sinners has this pious father taken by the hand and lead back from the dark road they were following, and put them on the path of Light, which leads to God, to Heaven!

LOCKTON. NELLIE ADAMS

A YOUNG DIPLOMAT.

I have a little son eight years old. He is smart and bright and for mischievousness I think he can't be beaten. I was sitting in a room one day reading and smoking, when he came sauntering up to me with the forefinger of his left hand in his mouth. I thought at the time that there was something wrong, but said nothing with regard to the same.

"Pa," he said after a while, "I didn't get one demerit in school today."

"You didn't, Willie?" I interrogated, throwing a rather fierce look upon him. "Well, I'm sure that's a good showing."

"Yes, and I carried a bucket" of coal up for Kate after school," he went on, still keeping that finger in his mouth.

"Why, you are getting very considerate," I returned.

"Yes, and I brushed your coat all off nice and clean."

"No, Willie, you didn't do that!" I said, looking frowningly at him, for I knew he had been up to something.

"Yes, I did, pa, and I lit the gas in ma's room for her."

"Well, now."

"And I shined your best shoes until they glitter like Sister Ella's looking-glass."

"Is that so? What else have you done?"

"Well, I studied all my lessons in school, got out at the regular time, said 'yes, sir,' to Uncle John, and helped the hostler around the stable."

"Why, what is the matter with you? Are you going to get sick?"

"No, sir," he replied, twisting around a trifle, "but I'm going to be a better boy—at least for a while."

"You are? Well, I'm glad to hear that."

There was a short pause and then he said: "Here, pa, are two cigars for you. I bought them with my own spending money. I'll buy you a boxful when I get money enough."

At this juncture he placed both little arms around my neck and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, pa," he asked, "do you like your little boy?"

"Why, of course I do," I replied, getting alarmed. "Are you ill?"

"No, but I've got something to tell you. Would you keep your little Willie from pain?"

"Certainly I would. Tell me what is the matter, my son?"

"All right, pa. I've—dear, good old pa. This morning Billy Button, Tommy Todd and myself were playing ball, and I couldn't catch very well, so I went in and got your brand new stovepipe hat and caught with that Pa, that hat must be made of awful poor stuff, for the first fly ball went clear through it, knocking the roof out. But never mind, I'll buy you another one," clasping me tighter as I essayed to rise, "and one gooder'n that, too!"

What could I do?—Boston Courier.

Mrs. B.—Dear me! What lovely closets this flat has!

Agent—Madam, those are not the closets. They are the bedrooms.

ITS POWER GROWS WITH AGE.

—How many medicines loudly blazoned as panaceas for all human ills have come and gone since Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil was first put upon the market? Yet it remains, doing more good to humanity than many a preparation more highly vaunted and extending its virtues wider and wider and in a larger circle every year. It is the medicine of the masses.

HOW SEA-BIRDS QUENCH THEIR THIRST.

The question is often asked, "Where do sea-birds obtain fresh water to slake their thirst?" But we have never seen it satisfactorily answered until a few days ago. An old skipper with whom we were conversing on the subject said that he had seen these birds at sea, far from any land that could furnish them water, hovering around and under a storm-cloud, clattering like ducks on a hot day at a pond, and drinking in the drops of rain as they fell. They will smelt a rain squall a hundred miles or even further off, and scud for it with almost inconceivable swiftness.

How long sea-birds can exist without water is only a matter of conjecture, but probably their powers of enduring thirst are increased by habit, and possibly they go without water for many days, if not for several weeks—Golden days.

PROGRESS OF NEW CHURCH.

The new Catholic Church in course of erection at the corner of Close avenue and King street, Parkdale, is rapidly approaching completion. It is expected to be ready for opening service early in November. The Separate School in connection with it will soon be fit for occupation.

KEEP TO THE RIGHT.

On many occasions during the past week people could be easily led to the belief that some groups of three, four, five and six persons pacing the sidewalks paid the whole taxes levied on the district over which they traversed, owing to their monopoly of the whole thoroughfare—and often linked at that.

Local.

MISPLACEMENT OF A COMMA.

A popular captain's wife was more than usually anxious over the safety of her husband, and accordingly a parish clerk received a slip one Sunday morning, bearing the words "Captain Wilson, having gone to sea, his wife desires the prayers of his congregation on his behalf." Unfortunately, by the misplacement of the comma after the "sea," the congregation were told that "Captain Wilson having gone to see his wife, desires the prayers of his congregation on his behalf."—Cornhill Magazine.

TIME HAS TESTED IT.

Time tests all things, that which is worthy lives, that which is inimical to man's welfare perishes. Time has proved Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. From a few thousand bottles in the early days of its manufacture the production is running into the hundreds of thousands of bottles. What is so eagerly sought for must be good.

ONE REASON.

"Why do men always laugh when they hear jokes about losing money at horse races?"

"That," answered the unlucky person, "is because a laugh is often used to conceal an aching heart."—Washington Star.

A CHINESE CONVERT.

Hum Bow, a Chinese convert to the Catholic faith, has been received into the church by Mgr. Racicot, V.-G., in Montreal. The ceremony took place at the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The church was crowded to the doors, a great number failing to get seats.

FIRESIDE SPARKS.

Capital Exercise—Turning over money.

"John," said a physician, "did Mrs. Green get the medicine I ordered?" "I guess so," replied John, "for I saw craps on the door next morning."

Teacher—What is a synonym? Bright Boy—"Tis a word you can use in place of another one, when you don't know how to spell the other one."

"My wife's millinery bill came in today." "Big, of course?" "Of course." "Make the usual kick?"

"No, I had just bought a 60-dollar Panama hat."

Meyer—What do you consider the best sign of spring weather? Gyer—The delicious feeling which makes you want to sit down and watch other people's work.

"Did you divide your bonbons with your little brother, Mollie?" "Yes, ma, I ate the candy and gave him the mottos. You know he is awfully fond of reading."

An ignorant but well-meaning individual came near getting into trouble at a wedding reception, for wishing the beautiful young bride "Many happy returns of the day."

New Office Boy—A man called here to thrash you a few minutes ago. Editor—What did you say to him? New Office Boy—I told him I was very sorry you weren't in.

The Mother—Uncle Charles asked the baby what kind of eyes it had. The Father—Just as if the dear little thing could tell him. The Mother—Well, she did. She said, "Goo, goo!"

Counsel for the Defendants (sarcastically)—You're a nice fellow, aren't you? Witness for the Plaintiff (cordially)—I am, sir, and if I were not on my oath I'd say the same of you.

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