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## Poetry.

### THE OLD PRINTER.

BY C. W. MCLELLAN.

A Printer stood at this case one night,  
In his office dark and drear,  
And his weary sight was as dim as the light  
Of the mouldy lamp hung near;  
The wintry winds were howling without,  
And the snow falling thick and fast,  
But the Printer, I trow, shook his locks of snow,  
And leaped at the shrieking blast!

He watched the hands of the clock creep round,  
Keeping time with its snail-like tick,  
As he gathered the type with a weary click,  
In his old rust-eaten stick.

His hairs were as white as the falling snow,  
And elderly day by day,  
He held them with grief like the autumn leaf,  
One by one passing away.

Time had cut with his plow furrows deep in his brow,  
His cheek was fevered and thin,  
And his long Roman nose could almost repose  
Its head on his gray bearded chin.

And with fingers long as the hours stole on,  
Keeping time with the clock's dull tick,  
He gathered the type with a weary click,  
In his old rust-eaten stick.

For many long years, through joys and through tears,  
That old Printer's time "battered face,"  
So ghostly and "lean," night and morn had been  
Earnestly bent o'er his case.

In a few years more Death will flock up his form,  
And "put it to press" in the "mould,"  
And a score o'er the spot where they lay him to rest.

Will tell us his name and how old;  
And his comrades will light that old lamp by  
And list to the clock's dull tick, (this case)  
As they "set up" his death, with a solemn click,  
In his old rust-eaten stick.

## A Select Story.

### MY FIRST LOVE.

By Charles Carlton.

A TALL, slender figure, with brown hair falling over the shoulders, and a pale, resolute face, clad in a long flowing dressing gown, and holding a light lamp above its head, and looking steadily down at me, as I ascended the stairs, this was what I saw on the night of the 18th of September, 1848.

I stopped short and looked at the figure, as it was looking at me. I had not been drinking, I was not walking in my sleep, and, more than all, I knew the face and form, but what in the name of common sense, was a young lady doing in the passage of an old inn at that hour, alone, and in such a dress? She blushed scarlet as I drew near, and wrapped her dressing gown more closely around her; but the next moment she was as pale as before, and spoke to me eagerly and hurriedly, but in a very low voice.

"Sir, are you the landlord of this inn?"

"I am not, madam."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Down stairs in the coffee-room, I think. But what is the matter? Are you ill? Has anything gone wrong?"

She stamped her foot slightly with impatience, and looked me full in the face. Her eyes shone like blue and soft, in general—but now they were blazing.

"Don't stop to ask questions, sir! Bring him here at once; and come back with him yourself. Bring pistols, if you have them; do you hear? And run for your life—for your life!" she added, leaning over the banisters, and speaking in the same low, hurried tone.

I was away in an instant, though I knew no more of my errand than the man in the moon. But I should like to see the man who would not have done the same. Apart from the fact that she was claiming my aid and protection, there was something in the ring of the voice, low as it was, and the flash of the eye, that warned me she was not to be trifled with. She would have made a good general, had she been a man; and I wager my head, not a soldier would have dared to retreat, had she spoken as she did to me that night. But before I finish my story, I must begin it. I am but a blundering fellow. My wife always says, if a mistake can be made, I am sure to make it, and I believe I was going to tell you about the landlord's coming, before I said what he had come for. Now, then, I will commence the thing right.

The inn, which is still standing, and may be seen any day by the curious traveller, is a clumsy ill-lighted house, situated in the heart of the city, yet keeping all its oddities which were just in the fashion some two or three hundred years ago. It is built around a court yard, shut in by gates, across which galleries are thrown, from one door to the other, with the paved yard below. It has

balustrades and stair cases containing sufficient oak to build half a modern house with; and deep window seats, and queer-shaped, gloomy rooms, and odd little closets, and landing-places, and passages, carpets, chairs, and pictures that Mrs. Neath might have kept house with, in the ark; to say nothing of the curious old china on the sideboards, and the wine-glasses and decanters to match. It makes one feel "respectable," merely to live there for a time; and I, who had been a wild enough college lad, found myself sobering down day by day, as I pored over my manuscripts, or dined quietly by myself, under the eye of Charles the waiter, off my slice of mutton and baked potatoes, my pint of porter, and my apple tart. Quite like a family man I felt, at times—though my wife and children were with my ship, that was to come home some day, and bring me an immense fortune. I did not know how long the voyage might take, not knowing even from what port the vessel was to start; and so I lived and worked at my manuscript, and waited.

I was not by any means the only dweller in the inn. People were coming and going all the time, but I scarcely ever saw them, or heard their names. The sitting-room next mine, on the second floor, would be tenanted one month, by a couple with an indefinite number of children; and the next, it may be, by an old gentleman who made no noise, and rarely spoke, except to tell his servant to bring him more wine; then would come a travelling artist, with his sketch-books and his great Newfoundland dog, and they would play at rough-and-tumble together, after he had done work, till the house shook, and the nervous lady above nearly went into fits; and he would be succeeded by a musician, who would play all day, and a part of the night, till the same lady declared she should be really for ever.

But she never was ready, and never came—at least, to my knowledge. For my part, I was always satisfied. When the children were there, and playing so noisily that I could not think, I used to lay down my pen, and wonder what their names were, and how they looked, and if they were playing the same games I played in my boyhood (so many years ago!) with my brothers and my cousins. The great dog used often to meet me in the passage and give me a friendly wag of the tail, if I patted his head, and after that, his bark was music in my ears. For I felt any one, who has a heart, to care for the acquaintance of a dog—a Newfoundland especially—and not love him. And the composer, who played all day the sweet creations of his soul—God knows what lovely tender fancies came to me now and then, as the melody went itself in with what I was writing, almost before I knew it. I am a happy fellow naturally, and disposed to make the best of everything; but setting this entirely aside, I am sure I was a better and a kinder man for the neighbors I had.

One day the room was taken, after it had been standing empty for a week, and I heard the voices of an old man, his wife, and the fresh, clear tones of a young girl. I often judge people by their voices before I see them, and I pictured the lady to myself quite correctly. There was a ring in her words, a buoyant, lark-like tone, that gave me the idea of a happy spirit and perfect health. Now and then the voice deepened and softened, and I knew that her face had lost its smile, and that she was looking grave—perhaps sad. So I knew that she had suffered, and as day after day went on, and the voice grew familiar, I judged that she had suffered deeply. There was something behind that natural gaiety, known only to herself and God, it may be, and yet it threw a gloom over her whole life, and would always do so. And I thought I should like to see her, and judge if my surmises were correct.

I asked the landlord about the party. He looked at the book, and read the names—"Rev. Edward Williams and lady, Mrs. Arnold."

They came here three weeks ago by the packet, and are going to Paris next month. Very nice people they seem, but they have queer ways.

I went up to my room, and wondered if "Mrs. Arnold" was a widow, or if her husband was still living. If so, I felt sure I was inclined to strange or shoot him, without any delay. It is very ridiculous—yet, almost, quite sincere—the feeling one man has towards another who (as he thinks) has robbed him of something which might have benefited his own life. I am sure many a married woman would laugh heartily if she but knew the fancies that pass through the brain of one of her bachelor friends, who admires her, as he sees her with a child in her arms, or her sweet face looking over her husband's shoulder (stupid man!) as he pores over a dry newspaper, quite unconscious of her presence.

While I sat thinking thus of Mr. Arnold, Mrs. Arnold, in the next room, began to sing. There was a gold piano in No. 42, and I had often heard her playing before.

But this evening she only seemed recalling snatches of sweet, sad songs, and I felt sure she was alone. Her touch upon the keys was soft and dreamy; sometimes she was playing only with one hand, and then would come a long pause, though I had not heard her leave her seat. I would have given worlds to have been beside her, in that hour of twilight. But it faded; and the cold wall of my room was still between us. I heard her singing "Then you'll remember me," very softly, and then the music ceased. If I had sat by myself many more I am sure I should have been mad enough to go into the next room; so, taking up my hat and gloves, I went out for a walk. The door of No. 42 stood half-way open, and from my end of the passage I could see into the room plainly, for the boy had just lit the gas, and drawn the curtains. She was standing over the piano, dressed in deep mourning, though a wedding-ring on her heavy guard shone on her left hand. "Thank heaven! the fellow is dead!" I thought; and then the next moment I laughed at my absurdity.

She had the evening paper in her hand, yet though her head was bent, I could see her face quite well. In only one thing was she different from her counterpart in my brain—she was not beautiful, as I had fancied she must be. She was tall, and straight, and elegant in form; and her face was one of those which change and vary with every shade of feeling; but only redeemed from plainness by a pair of deep-set and beautifully shaped eyes, whose color, I found when she threw the paper aside, was that dark, lovely blue, one scarcely ever sees except in the sky of a summer night. Just the eyes I had dreamed of all my life—and yet, there was not the slightest chance that they would ever look at me, as they had doubtless looked at Mr. Arnold deceased, a thousand times. She was a girl—widow—yet there was something in her manner which betrayed the married woman—an ease and aplomb, which rarely or never shows itself in a young girl, especially if she has been reared carefully by a mother's hand.

I might have stood in the passage all night, criticizing her, had she not entered it herself, suddenly (for her movements were all quick as flashes of light), and taking me so by surprise, that I am sure she would have seen me staring in at her, had she not, luckily for me, caught her foot in the mat as she crossed the threshold. She stumbled, and would have fallen, but sprang to her assistance, and caught her, and felt her head beating quickly against my arm. She panted with the sudden start it had given her, but stood up in a second, and just glancing at me as I stood beside her in the dark passage, said quietly, "Thank you, Charles. I might have hurt myself very much, if you had not saved me. And, by the way, I wish you would have that stupid thing taken away. My umbrella fell over it last night, and I suppose it will be my own turn next."

I went to the opera that evening. I usually spent my evenings there, or at the theatre. They played the "Bohemian girl" I remember, and the tenor sang Mrs. Arnold's song, "Then you'll remember me." And the lights and the music and crowd seemed to pass away, and leave me listening to her again, touching the piano softly, and half-singing, half humming the words—as if, if she trusted herself to utter them aloud, they would surely bring tears with them. I thought of her constantly. Kill the opera was over, and the house empty; I thought of her over her hot supper at Vary's; and I thought of her as I went home along the deserted streets. I looked up at her window to see the light shine there, as I entered the court yard. It was burning brightly enough, and I entered and sat down in the coffee room a few moments with the landlord, who was a great friend of mine in his way. I did not talk to him, nor he to me—we were neither of us talking men, and seldom had many words together. But he pored over the Times steadily, intent upon political news; and I held the Advertiser upside down before me, and felt with a thrill of grateful satisfaction, that I was no longer indifferent to the advice of Mr. Weller, senior—"Samuel! Samuel! beware of the vendors!" No—a widow had changed me in the twinkling of an eye, and I was in love, as hopelessly, as unreasonably and as foolishly as any sober man of thirty could well be!

I must now proceed to state that Mrs. Arnold's room was on the second floor, just above No. 42. To it she went quietly on that eventful evening, at the hour of ten past, at the time when I was sitting in my box at the opera, thinking of her—Something made her wakeful. She sat down at her toilet table, and talked awhile to the housekeeper, who had come up with "clean pillow-cases," and asked many questions about the house and the family. How they branched the topic, I do not know—but after a time, they began to think, and to speak about matrimony, strong phlegmon, called matrimonial rapture. The Clerk Lang ghost was brought upon the carpet, and various other stories

told, till Mrs. Arnold grew nervous, and laughingly declared she would hear no more. Then the housekeeper bade her good night, and she locked her door, and began to prepare for bed.

The room was large, rather dark, and full of corners and recesses. The light of the two wax candles on the toilet table only served to make those corners visible in their shadowy gloom. The bed was high, and hung about with dark crimson curtains; the furniture of the room was dark, too, and the cushions of the chairs and the covers of the tables red. It is a color which needs much light to set it off to advantage; it looked dismal enough to her just then. At one end of the room a door led into a large closet, which was unfurnished, and looked out into the court-yard; but this door opened out into Mrs. Arnold's room, and locked on that side. Sometimes linen was kept there; and the housekeeper had evidently been there that evening, for the key was in the lock, and the door was a little ajar. Mrs. Arnold would have preferred it shut, but she was too timid to cross the room just then.

She undressed slowly, singing in a low voice, the song I had heard her sing that evening. As she bent down to unlace her boot, she happened to cast her eyes towards the closet, (she had a vision like an eagle, and to her surprise and terror, she saw it move distinctly—only the lower part of the door, for she had presence of mind enough not to start, and the bed concealed the upper part, as she was stooping. The legend of that woman who saw the great foot of a man under her bed, yet had the courage to stay in the room all the evening, going on with her ordinary household duties within reach of the assassin's knife, till her husband came, and she was safe, flashed across her mind, and taught her how to act. She yawned luxuriously, interrupted her singing one moment, and then went on with a steady voice. After she had prepared for bed, she folded her dressing gown around her, and brushed her hair before the glass. In that mirror she could see the door move now and then, as if her visitor was getting impatient; and once it creaked. She started naturally, and threw her slipper against the wall, as if to frighten away the mice, and then resumed her occupation. When that was over, she went to her jewel-case, which stood upon the toilet-table, and turned its bright contents out in a heap before her. She held a spray of diamonds against her hair, as if to try its effect; she clasped and unclasped her bracelets, and toyed with her rings. Meanwhile, the door creaked again, and letting an unmet diamond fall to the ground, and stooping to pick it up, she saw, with rapid glance that a burly, ill-looking man was peering at her from behind the curtains of the bed—He started back, thinking himself discovered; and in that moment of horrible anxiety—that moment which, for aught she knew, might be her last—what did she do? She could hear his breathing distinctly, sharpened as all her senses were, and almost felt the cold steel in her heart, and so she made herself a mocking curtsy in the glass, and held the diamond spray above her forehead.

"Duchess of Nemours!" said she, softly. "And why not? I should look well with a coronet. I wish my husband was dead!" She leaned her head upon her hand, and seemed to think. A subdued rustling told her that the robber was retreating. The door swung softly together—she saw it in the glass—and her resolution was taken. Two diamond rings and a diamond spray she said, counting the gems aloud, as she put them back in the case. "A ruby and an amethyst bracelet, a ruby ring, and a garnet—But where is the garnet necklace, by-the-way? How stupid of me to mislay it! And my husband's gift too! I wonder if I have put it in my trunk."

The trunk stood very near the door of the closet. She went and unlocked it, and tumbled its contents out upon the floor, bending over it with her light, while that man was within two feet of her! I wonder how she had the nerve to do it. Indeed, she said afterwards she knew he was bending down too, and looking over her shoulder at the trickets as she turned them over with a steady hand, and her greatest difficulty was to keep from breaking out into hysterical laughter, and so betraying that she knew of his presence. The bracelet was not there. She pushed the things aside impatiently, shut down the trunk, and placed the candle on the bed—then she stood up, with her finger on her lip, and her head bent down.

"Where can the necklace be?" She turned as if to go to the chest of drawers, past the closet, that stood in the corner of the room; made one step past it; when, suddenly, and pushing both hands upon the door, locked and double-locked it in a second. She heard a terrible oath inside as the robber threw himself against it, too late and, snatching up her candle, sped out for help. She found me as I have described, while I was coming up the staircase, and she stood at the top of it.

In three moments after she had spoken to me, I came back with the landlord, the waiter, Charles, the head ostler, and "boots." They were all strong men; and the landlord had his pistols. Boots, I remember, carried the poker, and I snatched up a great carving-knife from the sideboard. What did that woman do, when she saw our procession, but burst out a laughing!

"You come as if you were going to join the army at Flanders," she said, after she had related her dangerous adventure. "I have locked the man up safely, and you will frighten him to death with your savage looks."

I colored up to the roots of my hair, and gave my carving-knife to Charles, and sneaked behind the rest. I believe, at that moment I hated her.

It was a great sight to see her marching before us, with her light in her hand. Most women would have fainted at being seen in *disabille*, by five men; but she, with the frank bravery of an American lassie, let the circumstances explain the dress, and marched us quietly into the room. There was her lock upon the toilet table, and there were the jewels glittering in their case—the contents of her trunk as she had left them on the floor, and the closet locked and silent. She put the key into the landlord's hand. "Help the gentleman out!" she said lazily.

I think she was the bravest woman I have ever seen, and I could not help looking at her with admiration and respect. She took a great shawl from a chair, and wrapped it around her form, shivering slightly, and then stood a little aside and waited.

We heard him breathing heavily, as the key turned in the lock, and the moment the door was open, he made a savage rush out, knocking the landlord and Charles down, as if they had been two boys. But boots and I caught him; and the hostler snatched a leather strap from Mrs. Arnold's trunk, and we had him bound in a moment. She sat in her easy chair, looking on quietly, as if she had been at a play, and when his eyes met hers, she smiled.

"You see I was too much for you," she said quietly. He growled out, "you are a clever woman, by jingo! I didn't think there was a woman as could bring Bill Nevins to this."

"Thank you, my friend; I never had a greater compliment paid me."

We led him from the room, and the landlord thanked us.

"Of course you will wish to go to Mrs. Williams's room," said he, "or I can give you one near the housekeeper's?"

"No; I think I'll stay here," she said, in her short, quiet, decided way. "I suppose you have not lost any of your friends behind you, my man?" she added, turning to the prisoner.

The fellow grinned and pulled at his forelock, saying, "no my lady; I was all alone."

"That will do then. Good night, gentlemen! Accept my thanks now, and I will offer them more suitably when I am not quite so sleepy."

She bowed us out of the room, and locked the door behind us. Every one was led in her praise but me. But I was glib. And when the housebreaker had been consigned to the tender mercies of the police, and the hotel was silent, and I alone in my room, I scarcely knew what to think. Such courage almost frightened me; and yet I remembered how pale she looked and that she leaned against the mantelpiece at first, as if to support herself; so I forgave her bravery, and thought only of the beauty of her eyes and the sweetness of her voice, and sank away to sleep at last, with the firm resolution that another day should not pass over my head before I had told her how I had learned to love her.

But the next day brought its own events, and what was worse, its own personages, with it. A carriage stopped before the door as I entered from my morning walk; a tall, bearded man with an honest, handsome face, darted into the house, and up the stairs, three at a time. There was a cry of surprise on the second landing—a murmur and a sudden mingling of voices that raised my curiosity to the highest pitch. I ran up to my own room, and passing the half open door of No. 42, there was my divinity in the arms of the stranger (confound him!) calling him "George," and kissing him in a way that made me long to poison him. Down stairs I went three at a time, and collared the landlord in the hall.

"Who is that man?"

"Just come? In 42?" he gasped, half choked and quite surprised.

"Yes!"

"Captain Arnold—Mrs. Arnold's husband. Just come from a voyage to India. I say, sir, no more midnight adventures now I suppose? You never will have a chance to play the part of a guardian angel again—eh, sir? think so, sir?"

My hand dropped from his collar, and consigning him and Captain Arnold to perdition I went out and kept away till they had gone.