

PARTED BY GOLD

Anderson, too astonished to reply verbally, walked down to the corner as he had been directed and found a lady in black, with a thick veil over her face, standing in the snow waiting for him.

Something about her figure, the turn of her head, told the man that he was looking upon high rank and hothouse breeding.

He removed his hat, and staring, kept it in his hand.

"Put your hat on," said the clear, cold voice. "I want to ask you a question or two, and if you answer me truthfully you shall not regret doing so."

"What do you want to know?" said Anderson, in a low voice, half sullen, half curious.

"First, the name of that man and person who drove off in the brougham which stood near mine."

Anderson thought a moment, his anger rising a little at the designation of Miss Montague as a person.

"I must ask first," he said, sullenly, "what you want to know it for, and what business it is of yours?"

"And a very respectable question to ask, my man," said the lady, with tones too indifferent to be contemptuous. "I am anxious to know why a friend of mine, the owner of the brougham, should be so polite as to send an actress home in his cab and walk through the snow himself."

"Oh," said Anderson, and a sneer flashed over his ill-tempered lips, "I understand. A friend of yours, is he? Then I don't envy your acquaintance."

He stopped abruptly, for the lady, with a gesture of disgust, had looked around as if beckoning her carriage.

"I see," she said, with a sigh. "I was wrong to speak to you, I might have known I should have been insulted."

"Stop a moment," said Anderson, who saw his mistake. "Don't go yet, ma'am; I'm out of temper, been riled out of my life. Confound him! I'll tell you if you want to know."

"Well?" she said.

Anderson knew by the movement of her arm that she had drawn her purse from her pocket.

"That gentleman's name was Montague—Horatius Montague, and the young lady"—he laid a distinct emphasis on the word "lady"—"is his daughter, Miss Annabella or Mary Montague."

"I thought so," she mused. "I thought so. One more question. I saw you looking at that young person if I mistake not, you were angry—shall I say jealous?"

He burst out passionately and drowned her voice.

"You may say what you please," he said, "you can say I am jealous if you

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like, and perhaps you wouldn't be far wrong. And now I'll ask you a question in my turn. I don't know who you are, stopping me in the middle of the night, a perfect stranger, and asking these ruminations"—he saw her wince, but was too much eaten up with spleen to enjoy it—"but I ask you if you had been idiot enough to grow fond of any one, had counted upon him for months and months; I say if you had made sure of him, wouldn't you be jealous of another woman came around him, making love to him, and deceiving him, and winding up by taking him clean out of your mouth? I ask you if you wouldn't be jealous and mad with things and ready to—"

The ignorant, ill-bred fellow little knew how nicely their positions paralleled, and the clear, cold voice told him nothing as it replied:

"To do nothing but get him back and bask my rival? Yes, I would, and you, too, I suppose."

"Try me," he said, below his breath, but with his hand clinched to his side.

"Try me. I'm regularly mad now, I tell you. I've borne it long enough. I've seen her change ever since he came with a lot of other young scamps behind the scenes. I've seen her look out for him, color as if she had committed a crime when he came lounging up to the wings, and what's more, she's taken to hate me that never gave her anything but a kind word. I can stand such a fellow as Tubbs; he's one of our own lot, and it's pretty equal fighting, but with a long-legged, handsome swell, with diamond studs and paws like a girl, what chance is there?"

"None," she said, with a cutting curtness. "None. As you say, he will carry off the girl, and you know the rest. Anyway, she will be lost to you if you do not prevent it."

"What am I to do?" asked Anderson, who, now that he had made a clean breast of it, had grown red-hot and ready for the anvil.

The lady walked up and down for a few moments, seemingly lost in thought.

It was a bitterly cold night, and the very policeman stamped his feet as he tramped past, and snivered, but these two were too hot with jealousy to feel the snow.

Presently she came up to where he was leaning against the post and spoke:

"Who is this Tubbs?"

"Our low comedian—a turnip-faced, goggle-eyed beast."

"And the girl favors him?"

"Well, yes," said Anderson, and added, spitefully: "Not out of any love, but kindness. She's as soft as wax to every one but me."

"Ay," said the lady, "now listen. You wish to separate this—this girl from my foolish young friend—you wish to balk him and get rid of the obstacle between you. Now I can help you, and as I am anxious to save him from her clutches I will help you."

"Ay," said Anderson, meekly swallowing this disparagement of the girl he professed to love for the sake of the stranger's help.

"By my brains," said the lady.

Then in a cold, measured voice she unfolded the plan which she had drawn up a few moments ago.

So neat, so diabolically clever was it that the man gasped for breath, and stared as if the veiled figure was that of the Sphinx himself.

"Splendid!" he breathed. "Splendid! It's certain to do the trick—but are you sure of him, confound him?"

The lady laughed a short laugh of scorn.

"Do your part," she said, moving toward the brougham, "and leave the rest to me."

He had breeding enough to unfasten the door for her, and removed his hat as he kept it open while she entered which she did without thanking him or taking any notice until the door was closed and the brougham was moving, when she flung him her purse and raised the window. The whole gesture and action were so utterly contemptuous, so eloquent of the opinion she had of such scum of humanity, that the man, low and base as he was, felt his blood boil.

With an oath he snatched up the purse from its little hole of snow and flung it after the carriage.

"Confound you!" he snarled, "you are one of his set, you are, every inch of you." Then he stamped his feet, and, forcing his hat upon his brow, hurried off.

When he had turned the next corner a gentleman emerged from the shelter of a wide doorway, and with a very blue nose, stepped into the road, recovered the purse, and put it into his pocket. Then, pulling his hat firmly on his head also, went off in the opposite direction with a chuckle of amusement.

"Well, if this isn't better than any play that ever was written, then I'm the only honest lawyer. Horatius Montague! By love! And, my lady, too, playing the midnight plotter; and



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a stupid fellow, Jack Hamilton, doing the best he could possibly do in the way of a mistake; and the young acting cad—There, there, I want a little fire and a glass of whiskey to set this straight. But the best of the joke is, Shalton, my boy, that you have netted the purse, and that it feels rather heavy."

When the well-appointed brougham stopped before the equally well-equipped villa, Lady Maud stepped out, and, turning to the coachman, said, in her low, clear and now very pleasant voice:

"Johnson, how long have you been in my aunt's service?"

"Nearly nine years," my lady," said the man, touching his hat.

"And in my uncle's, before that?"

"Ten, altogether, my lady; I have been in the service of the Pacewell family nearly twenty years."

"It is a long time," said my lady, thoughtfully. "Twenty years deserve confidence. I have trusted you tonight, Johnson. You will not betray me?"

"My lady," burst out the man, ready to die for this sweet-voiced daughter of the house he had served so long, "I have eaten the Pacewell bread too long to do such a mean thing. You can trust me, my lady, to die for you or any of the Pacewells, if it could do them any good."

Lady Maud laid her hand lightly on his arm—she knew better than to offer him any money—and inclined her head, saying sweetly:

"Good night, Johnson. I do trust you. We have been at Mrs. Leigh's."

"At Mrs. Leigh's, my lady," assented the man, and he would have stuck to his assertion at the stake.

"Why, Mary!" exclaimed the sweet little voice of Pattie, as Mary and her father entered the cozy sitting-room, the latter with a half smile sadly content upon his face, and holding his head assuredly half an inch higher.

"Did you come in a cab?"

Mary bent down over the chair and kissed the pinched face, and her blush was hidden by its wreath of golden hair.

"No, my dear," said Mr. Montague, throwing his cloak down and speaking with an effort at indifferent callousness. "We—er—that is, a gentleman was good enough to place his carriage at our disposal."

"Ah!" said the woman-child. "Hold your head up, Mary, you naughty girl. I want to look at you. Why, you are blushing. Placed his carriage at your disposal," continued the mite. "My dear, you talk like a duke, and look pretty nearly as grand. Come here

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this minute and explain!" The pirate, with his usual meekness, drew his chair up to the fire and sighed.

"Now," said Pattie, brushing the golden cloud from her forehead and looking after Mary, who had gilded from the room. "Now, dear, who's the kind gentleman with the carriage to spare for other people's disposal?"

"Er—er, I—don't know," confessed the man-child. "I—Pattie, my darling, I'm very hungry."

"Now!" said the little tyrant, shaking the miniature of a forefinger at him. "Don't my darling me, you wicked deceitful thing, how dare you! Hungry? You shan't have anything till I know everything; and you don't know what's under that plate," and she pointed to a dish lying before the fire, its contents screened from vulgar gaze by a plate.

"Eh?" said the pirate, sniffing. "Dear me. I—er—Pattie, my love, it is not macaroni cheese?"

"Never you mind what it is," said the child, drawing his hand to her cheek with a gesture contrasting yet harmonizing well with the mock sharpness of her voice. "You won't get any of it, nor Mary, either, if you don't behave yourselves. She's getting as close and secret as you. You are spoiling her, you wicked, abominably wicked thing!"

The father sighed and rubbed his head with his disengaged hand and kept his eyes fixed upon the plate.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean, dear," he said, plaintively. "I'm not secret. I don't hide anything. I don't—er—know the gentleman's name. I—here's Mary, perhaps she knows."

But Pattie stopped him suddenly and shut both her eyes at the doorway through which Mary was just entering.

The old man, who seemed to obey even her gestures with the blind, loving obedience of a child, held his tongue immediately, and sat looking at the fire in silence.

Mary very quietly laid the supper cloth and set out the things, then she came and looked at the fireplace, the light falling about which threw a soft glow upon her face that elsewhere in the room was very pale.

"Supper is ready, dears," she said, presently, and the pirate, rousing with a start, lifted the golden-haired mite to the table and stood as he always did till the dish was upon the table and Mary was seated.

Then he glanced at the dish and glanced hungrily at his mistress by the elbow.

"You may take the cover off, Mary, my dear, and give this naughty boy a small piece—a very small piece."

Mary lifted the cover, and the old man's eyes brightened.

"Ahem," he said, "a macaroni cheese, and—er—very crisp and nice it looks."

"Much better than you deserve," said Pattie, sharply, stroking his hand as it lay upon the table with her soft ones. "Much better. Mary, give him a small piece more—ahem, a little larger this time, dear, I think."

Mary smiled and did as she was directed. Macaroni cheese seemed to have lost its charm for her. The first piece on her plate seemed intended for the last, and suffered little diminution.

The twinkling eyes looking out of the thin little face noted the paleness, want of appetite and dreamy thoughtfulness, but Pattie said nothing, continued to serve the old man while he felt hungry, and, directly he was satisfied, urged him with sharp tongue and persuasive hand to eat more, not desisting until he pushed back his plate with trembling decision and said humbly:

"Thank you, dear, no more; I really can't—I really can't."

"Very well," said Pattie. "I shan't make another cheese in a hurry, if this is the way it is appreciated. Come, sir, lift me back."

He lifted her back to the chair, pausing a moment for her to reach his cigar from the mantel and put it in his mouth as usual, and then the three drew up to the fire and placed themselves in Pattie's hands.

And she arose equal to the task, her mighty task, to amuse her tired loved ones, to cheer them, to make them forget the labors and worries of the evening, to throw about them the soothing value of home and bind them in one band of love.

Would that the good people would take much delight in relating the stories of the pious and impossible children who preach to men and women old enough to be their grandparents, who shower tracts and extracts from sermons upon the heads of their unoffending and unfortunate schoolfellows, and who wind up by dying in the centre of a crowd of sympathizing and no doubt rejoicing Sunday school children in flat caps and enormous collars, could have seen this suffering little being exerting all her tiny little self to win a laugh from the two tired ones, and never resting till the roses were in her sister's face and the light in her delighted father's.

The pattern Sunday scholar must make the angels weep sometimes, out a stray celestial hovering about that room that night must have soared upward with a happy, glad-some laugh chiming with the rattle of its wings and left a blessing with the little mirthmaker.

When she saw that the light of happiness had fallen upon them she proclaimed the time for bed, and the pirate carried her to Mary's room, kissed, exchanged blessings, and went off with the echo of her sweet, happy voice to lull him to sleep.

"And now, dear," said the artful mite, nestling on her sister's arm, "tell me who left papa the carriage."

"A gentleman, Pattie," she replied. "But there's so many people in the

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world of that name," retorted Pattie, with unconscious satire. "What's his other name? You didn't say, 'Thank you, Mr. Gentleman,' did you?"

Mary laughed, but timidly.

"His name is Hamilton, dear," she said.

"Hamilton," repeated Pattie, thoughtfully. "I like it," emphatically. "Hamilton—Charles Hamilton?"

"No," said Mary, "John."

"Oh," said Pattie, "that spoils it. 'Now if it had been Jack—'"

"It is Jack," faltered Mary, and her face burned hotly.

"Hem!" said Pattie. "Jack! It sounds pretty. And pray who is Jack Hamilton? Don't say a gentleman again, my dear."

"I can't say anything else," said Mary, feeling that she had no chance in these loving hands. "I don't know what he is, where he lives, what he wants. Ah, yes, but I do that, Pattie," and a voice that was hurried and broken at times, but always grateful, she told Pattie of the conversation at the wings, using his very words, and even describing his looks and the expression of his eyes.

"Bless him! bless Jack Hamilton!" said the little, shrill voice, quiveringly. "Oh, Mary, fancy poor papa not being obliged to go out in the cold, wet, wicked streets to act to a noisy lot of people when he is so tired, and you, Mary?"

"Oh, never mind me, dear," said Mary, without a sigh. "If he will do what he has promised for papa, I shall be content to work always, to act till I die, and never, never work for anything else." Here came a sob, but it was stifled by her ardor. "But is it not good? Oh, Pattie, you should see his face and hear him speak. His eyes are brown, dark, and so kind looking. I can't think why he should be so kind to us."

"Can't you, dear?" said Pattie. "Hem! no, of course you can't. Dark brown eyes. I think I'll go to sleep. There, dear, good-night."

(To be continued.)

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