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LOVE AND MONEY.

A TALE.

At length Ralph was forced to obey his aunt's summons to appear, and he came fully resolved for a bold stroke. Again he exercised his fascinating arts; again he roused Alice from her meditative mood; again there were gay parties at Mrs. Aylmer's house, and again Ralph Seymour and Alice Morton became topics of conversation. The change was observed by all. Morton himself was totally ignorant of his daughter's proceedings. He saw her very seldom. He knew she was constantly at Mrs. Aylmer's; and, though he did not wish it so, yet he feared to forbid her going there, as he had noticed a spirit of self-will in her, and he thought he might be disobeyed by her. Disobedience he was unaccustomed to, and could not tolerate; so he conceived it a wiser plan not to place himself in the way of meeting with it. He knew nothing either of Ralph or his attentions, and concluded that this lady was the best companion Alice could have. Christmas near at hand, and great preparations were being made to celebrate its festivities by Mrs. Aylmer; but in Mr. Morton's house there was no notice taken of the pleasant season. He had never taken delight in seeing people very happy or mirthful; and if such a spectacle happened to come under his notice, he always frowned at it. He was a man who would cloud the brilliancy of the sun, were it in his power to do so, and his face was sufficient to check a hearty laugh from any one. The only person that had ever dared to smile or look joyous in his presence was Robert Power, but he was an exception in many ways, in the mind of Henry Morton. 'The place looks very dull,' said Alice to Mrs. Williams; 'very dull, when all streets and houses and shops are otherwise. Why, there's never any change here; it is all the same wearisome monotony. A wonder that you have lived so long here, isn't it?' 'No, miss; I'm used to it, and I'm old, you see?' 'But when you came you were not old.' 'I was young, but poor, and was very glad to get a situation; and necessity at first made me put up with everything, and now I like the quiet that is here.' 'It is too death-like a quiet.' 'For you it may be, for you are a wild fairy by nature, but I am different; so was your mother.' 'But I never thought this place lonely when she was here.' 'You couldn't for she always strove to make it as agreeable as she could. She was very religious, too.' 'Was she?' 'Very much so. She never thought this time of year sad, for she fixed her mind upon the great mercy that was done when the Lord of all consented to become a poor little baby to atone for sin. She often spoke beautiful words to me about this festival.' 'Did she ever mention to you a change in her faith?' 'Oh, yes.' 'You're a Protestant.' 'No, miss; I was, but am not.' 'How singular you were also con—' 'I was converted, miss; and I owe it in a great extent to your mother.' 'Would it not have been better for you to have remained a member of that religion in which you had been born?' 'Is it because I was born in error, that I should remain in it?' 'How could you be certain that you were not in the true road to salvation?' 'Your dear good mother first caused me to think and to look around me; and then, ardently wishing as I did to be enlightened, I was—for God looks upon those who are humble, and often makes things clear to them, when he refuses the same benefit to the proud and learned. 'That may be.' 'Is there a likelihood of your following in your mother's footsteps?' 'Well, I can't say just now.' 'You ought to think about it, miss.' 'I feel no great uncertainty, at present concerning my faith; I believe I'm right.' 'Oh, if you can believe you are, so much the better.' 'But, Mrs. Williams, you say you don't find it strange not to have any rejoicings at Christmas.' 'We can all rejoice in spirit. What have the poor beggars that we see in the streets to make them glad? And yet they can spend, and often do spend, a better Christmas than the richest.' 'But when we can have merry-makings, why should we not? Mustn't my father be a hardened man, not to be ever moved from the same track? I am sure he has some good traits; but the world has blunted his feelings

somewhat; and hasn't every one in the world blunted feelings?' 'No, thank God! All of us have different ways of acting with regard to the people around us, and your father's plan has been, as long as I have known him, to be cold, and apparently callous to every human grief and suffering.' 'Did you hear of his refusing to sell the corn he had stored, when asked by the relief committee?' 'I did, and it was a wrong thing of him to do, very wrong; but, Miss Alice, you should not think of those things; you should love him like a daughter, and not be so cold to him in manner. I'm sure he notices you, for I have; and, in my opinion, he could be moved by a show of kindness from you.' 'I have striven to be warm in manner towards him, but his frowning face has stopped my efforts.' 'It ought not have been so easy to prevent your doing your duty.' 'It was not my duty to force affection upon one who repelled me always.' 'You are wrong there, Miss Alice. It was your duty, begging your pardon, and you should have continued to act according to what your heart told you was right.' 'He won't miss me when I'm married, Mrs. Williams, that's one thing certain.' 'I wouldn't say that, for I think he misses you when you're away at that lady's house up there at Sydney-place; but you won't be married for a long time yet, I suppose?' 'I was only joking. Who knows if I'll ever be married? though my papa says I'm engaged by him to some one or other.' 'That Mr. Power that was below in the office seemed to be very fond of you, Miss Alice, and he was a good comely boy.' Alice reddened at being thought suited only for a clerk, and she said— 'I like him very well; a sister of his was at the same school as I; but as for marrying him—' 'Why, wouldn't you, miss, if your papa consented? He was a gentleman in all his ways.' 'Oh, yes, he was, but all I wanted to know from you was, if you were not to have anything extra on Christmas day, or if any one was invited to dine here, it is so lonely to be by oneself.' 'No, miss, we are to be as usual.' Alice went off to Mrs. Aylmer's, for the purpose of being made acquainted with her programme of her amusements during the holidays. Ralph was there, and this was about the third time she had seen him since his arrival from London. He asked her to go out with him for a walk. His aunt, he said, was not very well, and she could not go with them. After a slight hesitation she agreed, and away they went, until they had gone some miles into the country. It was sharp bracing weather, and Ralph was quite enchanted with the warm glow that showed itself upon Alice's cheek. Adroitly he told her so; ay, and added many more compliments, too, then; spoke of the escapes he had from love snares set for him by wily papas and mammas, and sly young misses. At last he dwelt strongly upon a feeling that he had experienced of late.— He said, 'I have steeled myself for a long while against love; but after many successes I am vanquished.' Alice took, as she believed, a surreptitious glance at his face, but he saw her. 'Yes, I own myself defeated.' 'Ah, Mr. Seymour!' 'Don't pain me by calling me Mr.,—say Ralph, can't you?' 'Well, Ralph, I knew you would be caught at last. You were so self-confident, and railed too much at female power.' She soon heard from him a declaration of his love; but she gave him no reason to hope for her hand. The next morning she was looking out of one of the drawing-room windows upon Merchant's Quay. The ground was white with frost; milkmen were going round the neighborhood; boys bound for school slid rather than walked, occasionally leaping across some frozen pool, or inverting their natural position upon the earth like young acrobats. Cheerily whistled the carter, clacking his whip over the heads of his smoking team. Up the rigging of the ships went the sailors, laughing and singing as they shook the icicles from the spars. Out shone the sun, pale and bright, adding to the whiteness of the house and chimney tops. But though it was a spirit-rising morning scene, Alice did not evidently notice it. She was dwelling on the events of the previous day, and her head was hot and feverish. A sharp, impatient sound at doors gradually nearing, and then—'rat-tat.' It rang through the house, and in a few seconds Alice was reading a letter from Robert.

ing, or of his prospects, though hinting of his speedy return to Cork. 'He has not been successful,' said Alice; 'and he is coming back, thinking my father will take him again; but I'm sure he will not. It is very dreadful, indeed. I was the cause of his going to America, and now he will come home to find himself in a worse condition than when he left. Poor fellow, I pity him sincerely. What will become of him? How I regret his leaving papa's office. He could always have remained there, and he need never have thrown himself upon the world. Poor fellow.' Alice did pity Robert very sincerely; for, though not saying he was poorly off, yet she could not think of anything that would bring him home after such a short stay but want; and, with all her boasting about her contempt of riches, she dreaded poverty. There are few who do not. Poverty may be made romantic in novels, and we can read of it with a good deal of interest, but every one would like to be rich, if he could. After breakfast Alice did not well know where to go. She summoned all her strength of mind in order that she might remain away from Mrs. Aylmer's; but it was no use. She broke through all sense of honor to him who was in another land; but she excused herself—for it was her habit, as it is the habit of all—by saying— 'I must explain to Ralph that my father will not allow me to marry without his consent; and that he has decided upon my future husband.— I won't say that I have of my own free will given my heart to another, as I might be forced to explain who that other is, and that would be very unpleasant; for Ralph would have such a low opinion of me were I to tell him I had consented to be the wife of one who had served in my father's office. No, I can't mention anything about Robert and my promise to him; but I will be very firm in not listening to his love-protestations. Indeed, I will.' She had no doubt in her own power. She knew not of the net that was closing around her, and she wished to dally with Ralph, to play with the bait. She wished to be admired and told she was beautiful, entrancing, seraph-like. She wished all this, and went to Ralph, knowing he would lavish such epithets upon her; but she would still be independent of him, quite independent. Oh, yes. Time had given birth to a new year, and the elements seemed to have come forth to greet it in bitter mockery. Wildly the rain beat, and the wind swept through the streets with fearful violence. Out pealed the bells; an anthem of joy, but the rushing of the winds carried sounds away. Brilliantly lighted were the houses of the opulent, and sounds of music were heard now and then, and light figures tripped to windows, and, looking through the curtains, laughed at the storm without, and then tripped again to join in the merry dance. A lull in the wind, and the tone of the bells is heard distinctly, and it is borne to the gay and happy, and they say to themselves, 'Another year—another year of feasting and joy! Another year to be spent, how pleasant!' 'Another year,' said the rag-covered beggar; 'another year, well, thanks be to God for it. I may be better off this time twelve months.' 'Another year,' said the man of sin, and his boast grew more fierce and angry; 'another year to be spent. Well, here I am to spend it, and I'll do something to-night to begin.' 'Another year,' faintly whispered the dying Christian. 'How good the blessed Lord is. Listen to the bells; they're ringing. What beautiful music they make.' In Mrs. Aylmer's house there was much brilliant light; there were many guests bringing in the New Year. Ralph and Alice had been dancing, and they withdrew from the rest of the company to a deep bay window, looking out upon the garden. It was almost completely curtained, and there they sat and entered into conversation. The result of Ralph's earnest entreaties was the fatal course of a private marriage between him and Alice. It was the first morning of the New Year.— Cold—bitterly so—with snow falling at intervals. Mr. Morton was sitting at breakfast, when a letter was brought him, the superscription of which was in his daughter's hand-writing. Taking it, he laid it on the table, not daring to open it, having had a strange foreboding of some evil near. His meal finished, he went down-stairs, taking the letter with him and even in his office he dreaded to open the missive. Breaking the seal at last, he read as follows:— 'My Dear Father,—I have taken a step that you may not deem prudent; but one which it is impossible for me to retract. I am married.— My husband is nephew to Mrs. Aylmer, and a lieutenant in the army. He is a good young man; he loves me fondly. I could not be deaf to his entreaties. I beg of you to forgive my not asking your consent. Will you write to

me? Do, and tell me that you still consider me your fond daughter. 'ALICE SEYMOUR.' After a half-hour of stupid astonishment, he rose from his seat, and falling upon his knees, he said,— 'Forgive her? Call her daughter again?— No. Most solemnly I swear, that while she bears the name of Seymour, I never will recognize her. Never give her one farthing: no, even if she starved before my eyes.' Again he sat upon his chair, slowly he regained his former composure; again he was ready to meet the world, and his frown was more unchequered. Yet there was boldness in his look, for he was prepared to chance all now. No more caution; it can be thrown overboard now. She no longer binds him. He can be either a colossal Croesus or a beggar. Yes, his money may fly upon all sides. Robert had intimated his intention of coming home, but not stating at the time the reason of his doing so. Upon his arrival in New York, as we have already made known, he entered as assistant into a large store. For his services he was remunerated amply, so that he never thought for an instant of becoming faint-hearted. He boarded in one of those houses that are, one might almost say, indigenous to America, where every one can have everything at a charge that cannot be called exorbitant. He dined in the public room, and it was a source of much amusement to him to mark the different faces, different accents, different dialects, which congregated.— On the first day that he sat at the table, one gentleman particularly attracted his attention.— It was not because of his being a talker, for he scarcely ever spoke, and when he did it was in such a slow, measured way, that none listened to him. He was one evidently who had preserved his formal European manners, and though having made money by commercial pursuits away from his counter, he endeavored to prove himself by demeanor a branch of an ancient stock. Not one of the Americans round understood the reason of his preserving such a silence; indeed, they attributed it to his want of the ability to speak on any of the topics started, but in reality this gentleman could have entertained twice the number with anecdotes. He was an old-world man, in more things than one, and though having been compelled to gain his bread by the profits arising from trade, yet he despised it. Robert was as civil as he could be to the old gentleman, and in the dinner scramble tried to help him, as it was easy to see he could gain little by his gentility. All persons there were in a hurry, and they ate in a hurry, carved in a hurry, and departed in a hurry. Since Robert had shown such kindness towards the very antiquated individual whom no one had thought worthy of consideration, a great many, if not all, conceived him a fool, and did not choose to show him much courtesy.— Therefore the two were thrown together for mutual support, and he of few words, but grand look, condescended to be thawed out of his iceberg by the good-humored young fellow, who it was plain wished to help him to get a nice morsel. 'My dear young man,' said the respectable elder, one day, that he had finished his dinner in less time than usual, 'your face recalls other scenes to my mind, and makes me ponder upon those years I spent in that land at the other side of the Atlantic—they were happy. Europe had an aristocracy, landed proprietors, sir, and the Powers were great people some centuries ago, and even less. Have you ever heard of the Powers?' 'Ever heard of the Powers? Why my name is Robert Power.' 'You startle me, my friend, you really do; but you cannot be one of the Powers, though, as I have said, your face strikingly resembles that of a relative of mine. Your birthplace is—' 'Cork.' 'There is something in this that must be inquired into. If the question is not considered by you inquisitive, perhaps you might tell me who was your father?' Robert told all he knew concerning his genealogy, and after some explanations, the old gentleman clasped his young friend in his arms, wept a little, and told him to look at his uncle.— Robert had been looking at him, and easily saw the resemblance to his father, and remembered how he had often heard the latter speak of his brother who had gone travelling and never returned. It was a shock to Charles Power to hear of his brother's death, but the pleasure of meeting with his son comforted him. 'You see, my dear nephew,' he said, 'I am in business. The family I sprang from were possessors of broad acres. I have been anxious to return home. True, I have no home now since your father has died, but I will, as I have determined long since, sell my interest in my concerns, and travel with you.' To this Robert offered no objection at the time, though having no intention of leaving his

situation, as he did not forget that he had promised to return to Alice, the girl of his love. In a few weeks Charles Power had given up his business to another, and found himself a wealthier man than he or any one else had anticipated.— But sickness stopped him as he was about to set out for a tour of pleasure, and he had to remain in New York; but he was cheered by the so-lacing words of his nephew, and the kind attentions of his confessor, for he had changed his faith some years before this. Finding himself weaker each succeeding day, he made a will, bequeathing all to Robert. After this he rallied somewhat, but yet his death in a very short time was expected by himself as well as by those around him. His pride left him, and he humbled himself as much as he could. Robert was a Protestant, but he sought to enter into the old man's feelings. He read religious books for him, and listened with much pleasure to the discourses of the priest attending his uncle. Thus matters were when he wrote his second letter to Alice. He knew that in a few months he would be master of a large sum of money, and he intended, after he had paid the last good offices to his uncle, to return to Cork. But as we have seen he did not mention this to her, wishing to surprise her. Precisely four months after Alice's marriage with Ralph Seymour, Charles Power died, and then Robert was free to return. But we must see how the happy couple were getting on, and what they were doing since. In London Ralph Seymour took a furnished house and hired a suite of servants, introduced his wife to a few lady friends, and then, believing he had done everything to insure her comfort, he sought only how he could best amuse himself. He could not refrain from gambling, and for some short time it proved very lucrative, so that he said to himself it was the best means of keeping his wife and himself in a respectable position. She knew not how he derived his income,—of course, she believed honestly; but, though she lived in elegance, we may say magnificence, yet she did not experience true or unalloyed happiness. Her husband made an effort to appear fond, but she saw that it was an effort on his part, and she often wondered at the change from his former conduct. One night she had been waiting until Ralph would come in. She sat reading, and counted the hours as they passed. She did not blame him for his absence; and she framed many excuses for him. At last there was a noise of heavy foot-falls on the stairs and a push at the door, and Ralph stood with a flushed countenance and rudely repulsed Alice, who had come for him to greet him. 'Why are you up contrary to my express order?' he asked. 'You did not order me not to wait for you, Ralph.' 'I did not order. Well, I desired, I wished that you should not; and allow me to tell you, madam, I'm not to be thwarted. I did not marry you because I loved you; I married you because it suited my purpose.' 'Ralph, Ralph,' gasped Alice, 'do not kill me by such words. Oh, did I ever think I'd hear them.' 'Well, you have heard them; you know now what my feelings towards you are. It is as well that you should know what will be the result if you don't write to your wretched old father for money, and make him send it to you. I'll be ruined. I owe money, and I must pay some of it. I won't be supporting you as a lady if you're disinclined to assist me.' He left, and Alice, stupefied, fell upon her knees. Her entire past life came before her as a panorama, and, sobbing, she prayed to the God whom she had forgotten for the world. She prayed as only those steeped to the very lips of affliction pray,—tearfully, earnestly, a prayer of anguish. She had not prayed truly since that time when, by her mother's side, she spoke sweet, simple words of homage to her Creator,—words which she, but understood by half, yet imagined more than in reality they were. She had not communed with him who, though the Master of all that is unknown, yet listens eagerly to the tender voice of childhood with pleasure, in those days when she conceived the world was paying her court. But, now, that she was wounded, cast down by a heavy blow,—now that she whose affections she had never doubted had declared, he did not love her, but the money that he might gain through her, she cried to the God of heaven and earth; she asked Him to look upon her with a merciful and pitying glance; she begged Him to soften her hard heart; she called on Him imploringly. Earth's children seldom look up to heaven when happy and untroubled. Sometimes they do, turn upwards, with a smile, but oftener, much oftener, with a weeping and care-worn one. This, alas, proves that in the plenitude of joy we are not very discriminating. We cast our favours around heedlessly, but in the day of trial, when the storm cloud has opened