

Ragged, and Torne, and True. AN OLD BALLAD.

I am a poore man, God know, And all my neigb'ours can tell, I want both m'ney and clothe,

I scorn to live by the shift, Or by any sinister dealing; He flatter no man for a gift,

A boote of Spanish leather I've seen set faste in the stockes. Exposed to wind and weather,

I've seen a gallant go by With all his wealth on his backe, He look't as lof'ly

'Tis good to be honest and just, Though a man be ever so poore; False dealers are still in m'strust;

SELECT STORY. MABEL VANE; OR THE DOUBLE SECRET.

June was in all her glory; and yet the blinds of the Hartly mansion were closed the bright day on which my story opens,

Already the carriages were moving slowly nearer the door; while the hearse, with its stately plumes and heavy drapery,

Already the mourning relatives and friends were gathered in the lofty parlors, and the white-haired pastor, who had known Louis Hartly from his boyhood,

The last prayer was said, the last kisses given, the last farewell spoken in broken voices; slowly and sadly they turned away from the casket which held all that was mortal of the son, brother and friend.

Slowly Mrs. Hartly moved from the room, leaning on the arm of Richard, her only remaining son, while by her side walked Grace Hartly, a beautiful girl of fifteen summers.

Oh! do not close it yet! Let me see him once more, or my heart will break! The sad looking undertaker moved aside, and the girl leaned over the face of the dead, pressing wild, passionate kisses on the brow, closed eyes, lips and on the marble hand of the young man.

O Louis, Louis! I cannot let you go! she murmured, in heart-broken accents.

The undertaker now came forward, and, gently raising her, he said in a soft, soothing voice,—

Don't, my dear child, don't take on so! Try and think it is for the best.

But even as he spoke, she broke forth again in piteous sobs.

Are you going to the grave? he at last inquired. That is, he said, in a hesitating tone, if you are able to bear it.

Yes, yes! she answered, in a choked voice.

Let me see; what is your name, miss? he said, glancing over the list of names on the paper he held in his hand.

Mabel Vane, answered the sweet voice almost inaudibly.

Mabel Vane, repeated the gentleman. The name is not here. I wonder who she can be? Some poor cousin, perhaps, whom they have forgotten.

Poor creature! how deeply she grieves! thought he, as Mabel, overcome with grief as the lid was finally closed, sank once more to the floor.

Miss Vane, he said, kindly and respectfully, they have forgotten to write your name here; but if you would be willing to sit in the carriage with John and Martha, the two old servants of the family, I think you might go.

I see no other way, as the other carriages are filled, he said, deprecatingly, fearing least her pride might be offended.

But little had he to fear from the poor young creature, who seemed completely overwhelmed by her sorrow.

Any place—any place! she moaned. And, resting her little gloved hand on the strong and sturdy arm so kindly offered her, she moved out to the hall, down the long flight of steps, and down the gravelled walk that led from the mansion, and into the carriage where were already seated John and Martha, the two old and faithful servants of the Hartly family, who had watched over the children of their mistress from their childhood.

They looked wonderingly as Mr. Boynton assisted Mabel into the carriage, and, as she sank, half fainting, on the seat, he closed the door and walked back to the house.

The girl sat motionless, with both hands covering her face, until the carriages moved down the hill, taking the road that led to the cemetery. After a short time she looked up, and, meeting the sympathizing gaze of old Martha, she leaned forward, and, taking the old servant by the hand, said, beseechingly,—

Tell me of his death! when and where did he die?

Old Martha took a snowy handkerchief somewhere from the ample folds of her dress, and, after wiping her eyes once or twice, said,—

Did you not know that master Leitch died suddenly three days ago? Heart disease, the doctors said; Master Richard went to his room and found him sitting in his chair, with an open Bible before him; he was lying back in his chair, one hand lying on the good book, and one other pressed against his side.

Master Richard thought, at first, that he was asleep; but when he found he could not wake him, and when he was so old and white, he knew something was wrong; he ran to call the mistress, and when she and Miss Grace went to the room, they saw that he was dead.

O my dear young master Louis! cried the woman, bursting into tears. What will my mistress, and young Miss Grace, and Master Richard, do, now that you are gone?

The young girl sobbed violently as the woman ceased speaking, and even old John found occasion to wipe away the tears that were streaming down his furrowed cheeks.

Was he married? hesitatingly inquired Mabel of Martha.

Married! exclaimed Martha, in surprise. No, miss, he was but a boy; why he would not be twenty for three months to come. Married! No, indeed. But there was a young lady whom my mistress was determined, he, or his brother Richard, should marry. She is as handsome as a picture, and they say she has heaps of money; perhaps you have heard of her; it is Miss Violet Leigh. You know her father, Mr. John Leigh, is the great banker; and my mistress is so proud that it would break her heart if either of the young masters should stoop to marry any one who is not beautiful and wealthy, like Miss Violet.

John carried Mabel into the little waiting-room, and put her down on one of the hard-backed settees, which, with the exception of a small looking-glass, comprised the furniture of the room.

He was joined by Martha, who gently removed Mabel's bonnet and shawl; the latter she used as a pillow, folding and placing it on one of the arms of the settee.

The young girl, conscious but motionless, looked like a beautiful lily as she lay there, so white and still.

Will you get her a cup of tea, or something to refresh her, John?

He left the room, and went towards another, and smaller, room, a few steps away. It had long windows, which

none of the Hartly's could stoop to wed with poverty in any form.

The girl made no reply to the last remark of the old man, only drew her veil closer to her face, and leaned her head back wearily against the cushions of the carriage.

The hearse had by this time turned into a winding road that led to the cemetery of Millbrook; and the carriages slowly followed after, until they came to the family lot of the Hartlys, where reposed the remains of Mr. Hartly, father of Louis, and Lucy, his sister, who had died in her infancy.

When the driver opened the door of their carriage, John stepped quietly out, and after assisting Martha to alight, turned to Mabel, and extended his rough, but honest, hand. The child, for she was scarcely more than a child, essayed to rise but sank back on the seat from sheer weakness; but by a great effort she rose again, and stepped out, leaning on the arm of each, which they, seeing how weak she was, had kindly offered her.

Solemnly they gathered around the grave, where was to repose the form of him who was loved so fondly; but where after bidding him a last farewell forever on this earth, and the clouds rattled harshly as they fell on the coffin, Richard Hartly stepped back, and kneeling down by his brother's grave, he gave way to his grief, while Grace and her mother were led away to their carriages by sympathizing friends.

At last Richard, too, turned away, and only John, Martha and Mabel, remained; tears flowed down the cheeks of the old couple, while the young girl stood with both hands pressed over her heart, as if to keep it from breaking beneath its weight of sorrow.

Come, miss, said the old man, it is getting late, and I think we had better go.

The girl did not answer him, but fell forward in a deep swoon on the newly made grave, her face buried in the clay. They raised her tenderly between them and bore her to the carriage.

Poor young thing! said Martha. Poor young thing! Who can she be?

They lifted her in, and Martha, sitting beside her, raised her head and let it rest on her shoulder, and, while supporting her with one hand, fanned her gently with a fan which chanced to be in the carriage.

John quietly let down the window, and, with a careful hand, drew aside the heavy veil, and then lifted it clear back from the face, disclosing all the grace and beauty of her features. She could not have numbered more than sixteen or perhaps seventeen years; with a face of childlike beauty which gave promise of a glorious womanhood; her beautiful brown hair hung in heavy curls beneath her bonnet, and the lashes which now lay on her pale cheeks were long and curling, and of the same color as the hair, that now hung in dishevelled curls over her pure, innocent brow.

As they once more neared the mansion the girl unclosed her eyes, showing them to be a beautiful, clear brown, which might, in happiness, sparkle and dance with mischief, although now bathed in tears.

When we get back to the house, you must lie down and rest, Martha said, bending over her in a caressing way.

Mabel shuddered visibly.

Back to the house? Oh, no! I cannot go there! She is so proud! And if she should scorn, and refuse to believe me, it would kill me. I cannot go there; please let me get out; or else ask the driver to take me to the depot. I will not have to wait a great while for a train to take me back.

My child, said John, you are not fit to travel; you need rest and refreshment. My Mistress may be proud, but she is kind-hearted and good, and she would be glad to have you return with us.

Martha, too, joined with her husband in urging her to go back with them; but Mabel's distress appeared so great that they finally complied with her request, and John spoke to the driver, and told him to drive to the station.

In a short time the carriage stopped before the little station; the driver opened the door, and held it while John lifted Mabel out, for she did not seem to have strength to stand or walk. Martha then told the man he might go as she and her husband would walk to the house.

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Will you get her a cup of tea, or something to refresh her, John?

He left the room, and went towards another, and smaller, room, a few steps away. It had long windows, which

were open now; a counter was placed in front, filled with confectionery, fruit, and a variety of other articles. A girl stood behind the counter; she responded civilly to John's salutation of "A fine day, miss," but she eyed him closely, wondering why he should be there, for she knew that he came from the great house on the hill, and she knew, too, that Louis Hartly's funeral had taken place that afternoon.

A cup of tea, miss, and make it strong and sweet; and I guess you had better give me some cake—some that is nice and fresh.

The girl nodded, and, turning to a middle-aged woman, who sat at one of the tables in the small refreshment room, repeated John's request. Very soon she appeared with the desired articles; John took the tray from her and hastened to the room where he had left Mabel and Martha.

My dear child, said Martha, forgetting, in her pity, to call her miss, as she said at first, drink some of this nice tea; it will refresh you and make you feel much better.

Mabel raised her head wearily, and Martha held the cup to her lips, while she drank slowly.

I cannot drink any more, she said, pushing the cup away gently with her little hand.

Will you not try and eat something, miss?

She shook her head sadly.

No, I believe it would choke me.

Well, try and drink a little more tea, raising the cup again to her lips.

She obeyed passively, and John took away the empty cup and untasted cake.

Mrs. Hartly will wonder at our absence, said John; but then, I think, we had better wait and see this poor child safe on the train. Martha nodded her head assentingly. There are plenty there to see to things, and she really needs our care.

They waited there until the whistle of the engine warned them of the approach of the train, and then walked out to the platform. As the train came in sight Mabel turned, and throwing her arms around Martha's neck, kissed her twice or thrice, and thanked her in a broken voice for her kindness.

Some time, she said, you may know who I am, and then you will neither of you regret the kindness you have shown to the young girl who is now but a stranger to you.

She took her arms from around Martha's neck, and taking John's hand, with childlike simplicity bestowed a grateful kiss upon his sunburnt cheek.

The train had now stopped, and, bidding Martha a last good-by, she allowed herself to be assisted into the car by John, who found her a seat, and, after whispering a few words to the conductor, who responded, all right; I will see to her, hurried from the car.

Mabel looked back as the train moved out of the depot, and saw her two friends waving their handkerchiefs until she was carried from their view. How long she sat there she knew not; she must have fallen asleep, for suddenly she felt a great shock, saw a confusion of lights, heard screams and cries of agony, and felt that she was going down, down, down, and could not check herself.

This is death she thought, and I shall meet Louis. And she knew no more.

Chapter II.

The morning rose clear and beautiful; the sun shone in golden splendor; the birds sang their sweetest songs. The air was fragrant with the perfumes of roses on this bright June morning—June one of the loveliest mouths of the year.

It was the day after the burial of Louis Hartly, and, in the mansion, there was that quiet air of sadness and gloom which prevails after the death of a loved one.

Mrs. Hartly had not come down stairs, this morning; she breakfasted in her own, apartments, while Grace, who felt keenly her brother's loss, wandered up and down the handsome garden, in a sad and listless way that was touching to behold.

Richard walked to and fro through the breakfast-room, alternately glancing through the window at Grace, and at the blue sky above, where he firmly believed the spirit of his brother to be. At length, tired of this, he walked out through the hall, and up the richly carpeted stairs, intending to go to his own room; to do this, he was obliged to pass the one that had been the sleeping apartment of Louis. Mechanically he turned the knob and entered; the room was darkened, and the furniture remained the same as it was on that fatal day when Richard had entered and found his brother sitting there so cold and lifeless.

A handsomely bound Bible lay on the table. It was the one from which his brother had been reading when death had come so suddenly. Richard sat in a chair that stood by the table and unclasped the Bible, not thinking of what was therein, but with thoughts of the church-yard where Louis was lying.

Suddenly his quick eye caught sight of something white among the leaves of the book, and, again turning the leaves, this time hastily, he found a folded paper which had before remained unnoticed. It was not sealed, but simply folded, as if the writer had become weary, and laid it away for a time.

Richard opened the paper and glanced at the writing; it was his brother's, and ran thus:—

MY DEAR BROTHER RICHARD:—there has been a gloom over me to-day that I cannot account for; it seems as if I could feel the shadow of the dark angel's wing. I have a strange presentiment that I am standing on the brink of the world, and that my soul may soon be launched on the broad sea of eternity; there is a strange oppression on my spirits to-night, and something urges me to write this letter to you. It may be only a morbid fancy, and perhaps in a few days I may look upon this and smile at what I have written; but some power I cannot resist bids me write, and I must obey. Dear brother, I am married, and it is the thought of her who is my wife that unman's me when I feel that death is near. You will wonder why I never told my mother, or you, of my marriage, but will not be surprised when I tell you that Mabel was on a poor governess when I married her. But she is pure and good, and as well bred as our own dear little sister, Grace. And perhaps some day, my brother, you may learn to love her, and then—well let the future take care of itself. You will find her address in my private desk, and O Richard! find her and be kind to her, for the sake of your brother whose heart may be stilled forever long ere you read this.

Your affectionate brother, LOUIS HARTLY.

The letter fell from Richard's hands. Married! he exclaimed, locking around in a bewildered way, as if expecting to see some one who could or would explain more.

Once more he raised the paper. Poor Louis! he said. He felt and knew what we none of us suspected—that he would soon cross the Dark River which flows through the vale of Eternity.

He rested his head thoughtfully on his hand, for a moment, and then, rising, walked from the room to his own chamber, and, pulling the bell-cord, summoned John, the old man who had been so kind to Mabel.

Tell Sarah to inform my mother, he said, that I must go away for a day or two, on important business, and bring me the morning paper.

John went down stairs, and soon returned with the paper and passed it to Richard. The young man glanced at it, when something met his eye that caused him to start.

Horrible railroad accident, he read, aloud. The train from New York ran off the track near H—, last night, and a large number of the passengers were killed or injured. And it went on to give the full particulars.

But he did not read on, for an exclamation from John startled him, and, looking up from the paper, he saw that the old man was pale, and stood gazing at him in a frightful manner.

Why, what is it, John? Are you ill? What ails you?

The old servant did not answer, but stood with the same frightened look upon his face. Martha was passing by the door, and Richard called to her and said—

Come here, and see if you can tell what it is that ails your husband.

But John had by this time found his voice and said to his master,—

The young lady, sir, was in that train. She is dead! Oh! I know she has been killed!

What young lady does he mean? asked Richard, directing the question to Martha.

There was a young lady in the carriage with us yesterday, and she seemed to take Master Louis's death very hard. Poor thing! She was very young, and so handsome, and seemed to be in so much trouble, that my heart ached for her, Master Richard, answered Martha.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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