

THE LESSON.

Oscar Owen and his wife Maria were a romantic young couple. They had little or no practical experience; their respective parents were plain, matter-of-fact farmers, but young Owen had imbibed some lofty ideas that made him despise the humble vocation of his father. Maria, at a boarding-school, contracted similar unsatisfactory impressions regarding the duties devolving upon a farmer's daughter. Both had faith in the intangible portion of their respective organizations, the mind. Oscar in his callow days, which were not yet, as he fancied over, did a dozen monstrous sketches, in crayon, and his soul was on fire to achieve others, in colors, that he was positive would place his name among the greatest of the world in his chosen profession. Maria had evolved sundry absurd stories which duty suggested must be given to the world. Hand in hand they purposed, not only to make the journey of life, but to climb the easy slope of Fame together.

The elder Owen proffered his son, on the eve of his marriage, the deed of a fine little tract of land, with a pretty, snug cottage upon it, an orchard, and the necessary accessories of stock and team; but Oscar intimated that their equivalent in money would be more desirable.

Just enough, he said, to enable him to establish himself in the city. He was positive his talents would soon win an independence.

Talent for what, lad? queried the farmer. I never saw any talent in you, only a knack for spending bank-bills and driving fast nags.

I am to become a landscape painter, sir, the youth answered.

A landscape grandmother! was the contemptuous retort. And you? turning to Maria.

I shall write sketches for the New York—Got an engagement? was the next sentence query.

No; but my ability, I am sure, will be quickly recognized.

A pretty couple! the old gentleman cried in despair. You'll go mooning 'round and starve to death. But an old man's advice don't amount to much in these cases. Go and try for your bread—not much butter'll be on it, I dare say—and, when you see your folly, come back.

Therefore it came about that Oscar Owen and his wife were settled in a pretty brick structure on a respectable street in New York. They set to work immediately at their chosen tasks. It should be their chiefest pleasure to shame the prediction of the dissatisfied parents, to show the gossips who had assailed them with jibes, and predicted want and defeat, that their prophecies were without fulfilment, their jeers, sharp arrows, piercing themselves. Visions of a return to the country town on a visit, clad in costly attire and attended by a retinue of liveried servants, obtruded, while in their respective lairs, surnamed studio and study, the infatuated "duo" wrought.

Oscar soon rendered his room hideous with uncouth representations of impossible scenes. It would have been no sin to worship any of them, for they could not be designated as any thing under the heavens. Maria beat her brain till the scared ideas fled out from the nib of her pen, and spread over ream after ream of foolscap. Both were enraptured with their success, as they were pleased to term the result of their efforts. Maria could not sufficiently admire the paintings of her husband. She loved to lean over his shoulder while he delineated objects which he indicated as trees, houses, animals, lakes, meadows and mountains. She never tired of gazing at his varied skies, glowing crimson and orange and purple, the great reaches of valley of intensest green, the hills rising to acute angles, making the invariable perspective. In the evening Maria read her sketches aloud, and often they wept together over the fates of bereaved orphans, separated lovers, etc.

At length it was decided that the time for their advent into the literary and art arena had arrived. Maria forwarded the sorrows of "Amanda Amarantha Armytage" to the paper before alluded to. Oscar placed a painting, magnificent in size and coloring, if not in design and detail, upon exhibition; a card, bearing his name, suggesting that the mammoth concern would be parted with for a consideration, was affixed.

Meanwhile the friends of the romantic and gifted pair were surely decreasing, but hope and inspiration buoyed their spirits to exultant heights.

Maria had intimated to the editor to whom

she had forwarded her article, that he could become sole proprietor of her first merited offspring for the sum of twenty-five dollars.

With the money, dear Oscar, I will buy your paint and canvas, the little woman declared.

No misgivings crowded in upon her joyful anticipations.

What will I do with my earnings, darling? asked the equally confident husband.

Oh, buy me paper, and lay by the rest to go toward purchasing our fine house on Madison Avenue.

That very night the post-boy brought the paper, Amanda, etc., was respectfully declined.

This was a dreadful blow. Maria wept and was inconsolable until Oscar suggested that perhaps she had fixed her price too high. Thereupon she brightened, and sent another, and many others, which met a similar fate. She wrote to the callous-hearted editor, at intervals, that he might publish her sketches for ten, five, and finally, two dollars; and when he still declined to entertain her generous propositions, she asked him, in lugubrious verse, if he was not aware

"That on my pen a fond heart hangs:

My lover husband seeks to know  
Why, hard of heart, you repel my soul's lays,  
And fill us both with dreadful woe?"

Oscar was confident that no one, unless his soul was utterly obdurate, could resist this tender adjuration; but when the head of said journal curtly replied that, though the propriety of hanging a fond heart on her pen was questionable, he should offer no objection to the proceeding, and suggested that she exchange her "soul's lays" for the efforts of that feathered biped, who, it was notorious, would lay without being subjected to such a repetition of "two." Oscar said, holding his sobbing wife in his arms,—

He don't understand you, darling. I have thought all the time that your style was too fine for a newspaper. Write for a Magazine.

In the mean time a gentleman with a droll twinkle in his fine eyes, called upon Oscar. I will give you ten dollars for that affair of yours up in the gallery. I never saw so much paint put on one piece of canvas. I hardly understand how the dogs in the foreground walk on water. They do not seem to sink, but skim the surface easily.

Those are cows in a pasture, meekly interlarded Oscar.

Possible! I'd never have dreamed it! And with this dubious compliment he retired.

Though inclined to be chagrined at the lack of discrimination in the purchaser, Oscar ultimately concluded that it was no business of his if his patron failed to discern betwixt dogs and cows, land and water. No suspicions of his own genius yet chilled his aspirations.

It would be useless to designate the stories, sketches, novels, romances, "ad infinitum," that Maria proffered to unsympathizing and unappreciative publishers, nor the monstrous delineations that remained in Oscar's studio, doomed never to add lustre to the name of the struggling artist. They early removed from the tasteful brick residence to a less pretentious abode on a less respectable street, where, for a long time, they strove to win the high places among the gifted they had once fancied so easy to attain.

Want was at the door. The money received at the outset had long since gone, as had jewelry and superfluous clothing. Forebodings seized upon them. They began to comprehend their own mental deficiencies. They understood now that they were better adapted for the labor of hands than brains. Necessity is a great disenchanter. Hungry and forlorn, friendless in a big city, in a wretched room in an ugly, frowning old tenement house, amid the Babel of confusion made by scolding women, crying children, and a termagant spinster across their own landing, our poor, infatuated friends saw the beautiful fabric of their dreams gradually dissolve in thin space.

One wild, chill night, when the wind, creeping like a robber through yawning seams, hourly threatening the destruction of the reclining edifice, drove the husband and wife to crouching beside the small stove, Oscar arose, and brought in armfuls of his treasured pictures, which he heaped upon the fire. The hungry blaze swallowed them, as the mournful hours in the past had absorbed the hopes and dreams of his manhood. Maria tearfully contemplated their destruction.

They shall warm us, if they will not feed us, he said, gloomily.

Then Maria, with a sigh, added the lives of her heroes and heroines, and sobbed while the paper flamed fiercely; then, as the gray

ashes, puffed out by the wind upon the floor, wavered and crumbled to almost impalpable dust, she said,—

Now, my husband, let us work. I will solicit sewing; you—what will you do?

Anything I can find to do. We will not go back to our fathers empty-handed.

Over the waning embers, where the white moonlight laid pallid fingers in blessing—they thought upon them—they planned for the morrow. They slept at length, unmindful of the harsh voice of the complaining breeze, the deep boom of the troubled waters in the bay, the keen, frosty air that caught their breath and transfixed it in crystals upon the thin covering.

For weeks Oscar toiled at illy-requited labor, Maria, worn to a shadow in the gloomy apartment, stitched incessantly. She tried to be brave and resolute, and smiled upon her husband, when he came home utterly wearied, in a way that was pitiful, and comforted and caressed him; but alone she sobbed, and grieved, and lost, sometimes, all thought of work, and sat motionless, thinking—thinking of the wide green fields, starred with violets, and broided with the gold of dandelions—for it was spring again—of the gentle cows down in the green pasture, the old fathers under the red porches, smoking their pipes, (the mothers long ago laid down life's burdens no hard ones to the quiet souls, and took up the crowns yonder,) of the pretty farm that might have been her own and Oscar's.

One afternoon Oscar came home to find his wife sitting in the rude arm-chair, dumb and white. She made no reply to his anxious inquiries. The eyes stared at him stonily. He lifted her to the bed, and summoned his next neighbor. He had a little money, and procured a doctor, who shook his head when he saw the patient.

She will live? Oscar said, huskily.

God only knows! was the solemn answer.

Doctor Mirley had a heart, and it compassionated the young man, who, wild with grief, had thrown himself by his wife's pillow, where he strove to recall the wandering spirit. He raised the husband to his feet. Go, he said. We will do all that can be done. You are nearly ill yourself. Here is the money you gave me. Take it and procure food.

The good physician opened the door and gently pushed Oscar over the threshold.

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I thought I heard father's voice.

For the first time in three days Maria spoke. Oscar, admonished by a glance from Doctor Mirley to be judicious, restrained his feelings, and, in moderately calm tones, assured his wife that her father was indeed present. Then the sobbing old Farmer Jones folded his daughter in his arms, while Mr. Owen, senior, wept over the thin hand he clasped with the shrunken fingers of his son.

Maria rallied fast, under the genial benignity of the overjoyed parents.

We came just in time, declared Mr. Owen, embracing his son and Maria, and Maria's father, and Maria's baby, whom the kind woman, the only real neighbor the couple had, just brought into the room.

Then Mr. Jones ran about the streets, hurrying along, after a brief time, sundry boys, laden with baskets and bundles, with crockery and food and fuel, and with his own hands helped spread a bountiful feast.

Any further hankering after pictures? questioned Mr. Owen, wiping the soup from his mouth with an immense crimson handkerchief, as the party lingered at the table.

No. I am cured of my folly.

Owen hit his son such a resounding slap in compliment to this declaration as to almost stan him.

That's good for you. You'll go home with us. The farm I bought is ready. I knew you'd fail. You needed the lesson.

It was a hard one, but well learned, father, Oscar replied.

And about my darter? intelarded Jones. How 'bout romances, Maria?

Maria smiled, but tears were in her eyes. She hugged the baby closer.

I love the realities of husband and child, and a peaceful home near our fathers, better than the ideas that have brought us all so much misery.

It was doubtful if all of this little speech was perfectly lucid to the honest old chaps, who hastened round to kiss "Riah" and baby, and then to shake hands with Oscar. But Maria and Oscar found out, down at the farm, in the home among the apple-trees, a truer, if humbler, sphere, whose realities of toil and care, sickness and death, alternated by rest and hope, were more precious, for more perfect, than the early life, filled with

feverish visions, which receded like the treacherous mirage as they advanced, and wild ambitions, tormenting them with promises ever to remain unfulfilled.

MIXED UP.

Some years ago, when the writer was a reporter upon an Eastern paper, it devolved upon him to write for the same edition an account of the presentation of a gold headed cane to the Rev. Dr. Mudge, the clergyman of the place, and a description of a patent hog-killing, and sausage machine, which had been put in operation at the factory. Now, what made the Rev. Dr. Mudge mad was this: The inconsiderate buccaneer who made up the forms of the paper got the two locals mixed up in a frightful manner, and when they went to press something like this was the appalling result:

Several of the Rev. Dr. Mudge's friends called upon him yesterday, and after a brief conversation the unsuspecting hog was seized by the hind legs and slid along the beam until he reached the hot water tank. His friends explained the object of their visit and presented him with a very handsome gold-headed butcher, who grabbed him by the tail, swung him round, slit his throat from ear to ear, and in less than a minute the carcass was in the water. Thereupon he came forward and said that there were times when the feelings overpowered one, and for that reason he would not attempt to do more than thank those around him for the manner in which such a huge animal was cut into fragments was simply astonishing. The doctor concluded his remarks when the machine seized him, and in less time than it takes to write it the hog was cut into fragments and worked up into delicious sausage. The occasion will long be remembered by the doctor's friends as one of the most delightful of their lives. The best piece can be procured for fifteen cents per pound, and we are sure that those who have sat so long under his ministry will rejoice that he has been treated so handsomely.

COURTING IN CHURCH.—A young gentleman happened to sit at church in a pew adjoining one in which was a young lady, for whom he conceived a sudden and violent passion, and felt desirous of entering into a courtship on the spot, but the place not suiting a formal declaration, the exigency suggested the following plan: He politely handed his neighbor a Bible, open, with a pin stuck in the following verse: Second Epistle of John, verse 7th.—"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto you, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." She returned it with the following: Second Chapter of Ruth, 10th verse—"Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, why have I grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take notice of me, seeing that I am a stranger?" He returned the book pointing to the 13th verse of the Third Epistle of John—"I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face." From the above interview the marriage took place the following week.

NEVER get angry. It does no good. Some sins have a seeming compensation or apology in present gratification of some sort, but anger has none. A man feels no better for it. It is really a torment. Another reason for never getting angry is that there is so little that can happen that is worth getting angry about.

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