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NOT MARRIED FOR LOVE;

OR,

THE TRUE WIFE.

A DOMESTIC TALE BY HOLME LEE.

'And so you are married Melvil? Rather a rapid proceeding for a curate just ordained.—By the by, did you not say were married before you were ordained?'

'Yes; before I took my degree.'

'I would have kept you out of that folly, if I had been at hand, at any rate. And, of course, you are as poor as church mice?'

'As poor as church mice—not a doubt of that; and the young clergyman glanced round his little cottage study, which was luxuriously furnished with two cane chairs, and a low railed chair, cushioned with gray chintz, which indicated feminine occupation, a stained deal table and heaps of books piled on shelves fitted into the walls. It was summer time, and as the window was open to the lawn, with a framework of creepers all round it, and the sun shining in, it did not look so very desolate as might have been supposed. Mr. Melvil had often thought it a happy retreat before; but he fancied it poverty stricken now, because his wealthy college friend seemed to pity him for having nothing better.'

'Married for love?' suggested his friend ironically.

'The curate contemplated the threadbare knees of his black trousers for a minute or two, and then said, confusedly, 'No.'

'Not married for love, yet so indiscreetly tied up! How was it then, pray?'

'I'll tell you—it was for pity.'

'Could not the way have had a worse motive! but that's by the way—go on.'

'You remember Sandys—our tutor.'

'Yes—good fellow.'

'Too good by half. He provided for everybody but his own family, as if he meant to live for ever, then at the most inconvenient season possible he died, and his income died with him.—There was the widow and the two boys, and there was Clary—you recollect Clary?'

'Yes; the wild little gipsy! but you surely did not marry her?'

'Yes; Clary is my wife.'

'Why, she must have been a baby!'

'She was sixteen within a few weeks after we were married. You see, the little thing came to me crying, and saying that she was to be sent to some horrid school, where she did not want to go.'

'I perceive; and you, being soft-hearted, invited her to become your wife on the spot.'

'Precisely so.'

'And she, blushing celestial rosy red, answered that she should be very glad?'

'Mamma consented promptly, and the sacrifice was accomplished,' said the curate, in mock heroic style. 'Clary is a good girl, but I never was in love with her. Is it not that sagacious worthy, Sir Thomas Moore, who says we never ardently love that for which we have not longed? I had never thought of Clary except as a child, until pity for her forlornness surprised me into the commission of matrimony.'

'If Mr. Melvil and his friend had been quicker-eared, or rather less absorbed, they might have heard a light step crossing the turf as they talked together, and retreating fast—fast as the last words were spoken. It was Clary. Neither of them, however, saw either the approach or the flight, and they went on talking quite composedly.'

'Benham offered me his London curacy; but Clary hates London, so I took this, and thought myself very lucky. We got the cottage cheap and eighty pounds a year—a decent starting for the three of us—we have a treasure of an Irish servant besides ourselves to feed.'

'And how many more by-and-by?' insinuated Mr. Warene, spitefully.

'Just in time to prevent a reply, the treasure of an Irish servant opened the study door, and announced in her rich brogue, 'Place, sir, t' tay's ready in t' dhrawing-room, an' t' missis is waiting.'

'Come along then, Warene. I wonder whether Clary will recognize you.'

The two gentlemen crossed the passage to the opposite parlor, which Nora signified as the 'drawing-room,' and found the mistress of the house seated before the tray, prettily dressed in a clear blue muslin, with her soft brown hair flowing in wavy curls, and with a smile on her rosy mouth—the little hypocrite! Her heart was fit to break under that gently swelling bodice, where she had so daintily fastened a cluster of George's favorite flowers. She had tired herself in her best to do her husband's friend honor, and as Mr. Warene shook hands and received the welcome of an old acquaintance, he thought in his own mind that—the indiscretion of the marriage apart—she was as comfortable a

little wife as a man need desire to possess. She was not exactly pretty, but she looked very nice and lovable; her skin was so clear, her complexion so pure, her figure so girlish and graceful. Then all her ways were quiet and gentle; she had affectionate eyes, and expression versatile as well as sweet, and her voice was musical as a bird's. Unless Mr. Melvil had told his friend in so many words that he was not in love with his wife, Mr. Warene would have discovered it for the curate was as assiduous in his attentions to her as if these were the courtship days.

Clary gave no sign that anything had happened to grieve her; but she was relieved when tea was over, and George went out with Warene to show him the village, which was considered pretty by strangers, and which had been heaven to her. She had been very happy with her young husband, and had found nothing wanting to her content; but now, as the two walked away through the garden, the stood watching them with clasped hands and the tears in her sunny eyes, repeating under her breath, 'George said he did not love me; he married me for pity!—What shall I do! What shall I do?'

II.

Perhaps many young wives in Clary's painful position would have made a made a virtue of proclaiming their wrong, and inflicted misery on themselves and their helpmates; but not so George's girl-wife. Her first impulse was against herself, that she should have been so blind as not to see that it was sacrifice and not a joy to him to marry her; but then she reasoned that it was done, irrevocable and that she could only try and disturb his peace by betraying what she had accidentally overheard; so she kept it to herself, and only tried to make him love her better.

'Though he does not love me, I know he would miss me and be very sorry if I were gone,' she said in her heart; and after a while the sore pain that the first stab had given her passed away, and the same bright face smiled by his side, and the same light tripping feet went by his side, and the same affectionate sunshine filled his home as heretofore.

There was plenty of work in his parish for Mr. Melvil, for his rector was rarely at home; but the young clergyman took a conscientious view of his post, and did his utmost. Clary was a great help to him. The cottagers liked her, and the school children liked her. The people, and the squire at the head of them, said the Melvils were an acquisition to the parish, and long might they stay there! The young wife, especially, was beloved: those who were in trouble said she seemed to know how to talk to them about faith, patience, and comfort, better than the curate himself—though what trials could she have known at her age?

In the village there were many ladies, single and double, portress and well dowered, pretty and plain; but amongst the troop, had the curate being free to choose, he could not have found one to suit him half so well as Clary. Sometimes, I am sure, he must have gone home to the rest and peace of her presence with an elastic, masculine satisfaction, although he was not in love. For instance, when he had called at Mr. Beonetti's, of the Hall, and heard the squire deprecate her husband's sense and character, as if by the process she exalted her own;—Clary would never depreciate his; if she had a fault, it was that she inclined to glorify him too much. Or, again, after a visit to Captain Wells, whose three pretty daughters were flounced, perfumed, and accomplished out of all nature and genuineness. They had sweet expressionless faces, they lisped the *fastest* nonsense, and conducted their selves with regard to the duties of life more like butterflies than creatures endowed with souls; the very prettiest of them would have bored the clever curate to extinction in a month. Or the two Miss Frances, who flirted so dreadfully with officers; or Miss Hardwood, who was rich as a Jew, and fearfully ill tempered; or Miss Briggs, who was rich also, but penurious and very vulgar; or Miss Clerks, who were very nice girls, but had not an idea beyond crochet-work; or Miss Farsight, who was too scientific to mend her stockings; or Miss Diana Falla, who wrote poetry and rode to hounds; or Miss Broughtons, who were nothing particular. These ladies had their good points; but not one of them would have had Clary's charming little way of loving George better than herself. Only let him fear that he is going to loose her, and then, I think, he will find out that, though he is not in love, still he loves her very much!

III.

Greenfield had its drawbacks, as well as its delights, like other pretty villages; and one of the most serious of those was a tendency to low fever when the spring season had been unusually damp. A beck that ran across the green overflowed in the rains, and when it retired to its bed, left behind a deposit which bred pestilential vapors that poisoned the lives of the people.—

The curate's cottage stood high, and out of the influence of the balmy exhalations; but his duties carried him to and fro amongst the poor, and exposed him daily to the contagion. No danger would have made him evade these duties, however at this season than at any other; but when fever was in the village, he had his commands on Clary that she should stay at home; and Clary stayed, like the obedient little wife she was, instead of being fondly teased, and adding to his inevitable anxieties.

But Clary watched him with fervent tenderness all the time, and was ever ready with dry clothing and warm slippers when he returned home, to spare him the risk of cold. But what was to be done to pass, for all her love and all her care?'

One steamy April night, after a long and fatiguing afternoon on the Marsh, as the lower part of Greenfield was called, the curate came home, ready to sink with weariness, and complaining of a pain in his head, and sickness. Clary stole out of the room, and despatched the Irish servant to summon the doctor. When the doctor came, he ordered George to bed, and said he hoped to set him up again in a few days. But, instead of improving, George grew worse; the fever ravaged his frame terribly, and he was delirious day after day. This went on to the climax of the disorder, and then it took a favorable turn; but a long season of uselessness and inaction lay before the curate. He must leave Greenfield for sea air, and live by for months. Meanwhile his absence must be supplied by another clergyman.

The inevitable 'musts,' so trivial to other people who have long purses, were purely and simply a sentence of destitution to the Melvils. George wanted to stay at home, and get occasional help from his neighboring clergy; but Clary made up a determined little face, and said 'No.' They must go over to the Isle of Wight for the summer months, and regain health and strength for him, even if Greenfield had to be resigned altogether.

Clary managed somehow: she would not give details, on the plea that George must keep his mind quiet; and in the beginning of June they found themselves lodged in a retired farm cottage, standing in the midst of delicious meadows, with a view of a glorious bay, cliffs, and distant towns. They luxuriated in the beauty around them like a pair of happy children; and though George was not in love with his sunshine little wife, he would have got on there very indifferently without her. She petted and indulged him to that extent that he grew stout, and strong, and selfish, very fast indeed; and would sometimes have forgotten how very ill he had been, if she had not watched him, and taken such extraordinary care of him. She liked to bear herself claimed in his short, imperative way: it showed, at any rate that she was needful to him. If she had gone into the polished farm kitchen to superintend or to concoct with her own hands some wonderful tempting dish, to coax his delicate appetite, presently he was heard from the garden or parlor crying out, 'Clary, what are you doing? I want you! Then when she appeared, with floury little paws, and fire-heated cheek he would just look up at her and say, 'Why do you run away and leave me for hours together, Clary?' and she would laugh, and tell him she had not been gone ten minutes—what did he mean? and then disappear again. Sometimes he would come into the kitchen itself, and sit down in Farmer Hood's great chair, and follow her about with his hollow eyes and finally take her off with his arm round her waist—although he was not a bit in love, and only pitted her!

He was not allowed to study solemn books; but Clary permitted a little light mental aliment to be taken each morning and evening from certain thin blue magazines, which she borrowed from the library in the nearest village, which was slowly developing into a fashionable watering-place. One evening, while she was doing a little of the fine darning, in which nobody excelled her, George, who had been for some time sitting silent over his book, broke out into his merry laugh, saying, 'Listen here, Clary; here are some beautiful verses! Hark, how the lines limp. I wonder how the editor could print such stuff!'

He began to read the lines in a mock-heroic style, which certainly made them infinitely ludicrous. At first, Clary colored a little; but before he came to the end she was laughing as heartily as himself.

He then volunteered to read a short story, entitled 'Patience Hope's Trial,' which he did with a running commentary, such as, 'That is bad grammar'—'The punctuation makes nonsense of every other paragraph'—'High flown, rhapsodical rubbish,' &c. &c.; and when he came to the end, he pronounced it the silliest little tale he had ever read. Clary darned on most composedly, and agreed with George that it was silly; but there was a mischievous sparkle in her eyes, as if she were sorely tempted to make a confession about that same silliest of little tales;

however, reflecting that the shock of learning he had a literary wife might be too much for his nerves in their present weak state, she discreetly held her peace and contented herself by making him imbibes her earnings under various strengthening and agreeable forms.

Before the summer was ended the thin blue magazine readers were familiar with Clary's signature of 'Ivy'; but after that she disappeared suddenly from its pages to many people's regret; for its subscribers were not, as a rule highly trained, educated, college gentlemen, but day workers and toilers in the world's wide labor-field, who find an agreeable relaxation in the perusal of a silly little tale, whose interest turns on the humble, daily virtues which they have so much occasion to exemplify in their own obscure lives. I believe the editor was inquired of once or twice why 'Ivy' had ceased her contributions, 'Ivy' was otherwise occupied.

In the first place, Mr. Warene had presented George with a small living, and there was a queer little rectory house to paint, paper, and generally embellish. Far be it from me to derogate from Clary's dignity, but I will tell one thing of her, because I think it was to her credit. The first time Mr. Warene went to see his old friend, George was in his study, as usual, but it had been made to look more cosy and homelike than that at Greenfield, and the young rector looked proportionably more dignified in it. After a little desultory chat, George proposed to seek his wife—and how does everybody think they found her employed? She was papering her own drawing-room—that little drawing-room which was afterwards the admiration of the whole neighborhood. Mounted on some steps, in a big apron, the property of the Irish treasure, with her brown curls tucked up behind her little ears, and with party hands, and sleeves rolled up above her dimpled elbows, she was sticking the pretty simple paper upon the wall—the last bit of it. 'What did she do? Jump down in blushing horror at being caught in such *deshabille*, and cover everybody else and herself with confusion? Not a bit of it. She looked radiantly over her shoulder, and said—'You must wait five minutes; then I'll speak to you,' and proceeded to finish her task to the admiration of the Irish treasure, who had acted as her assistant; and also to the admiration—and not a bit to the astonishment—of Mr. Warene and George.

The work done, she descended; and, as the gentlemen had got possession of the window seat, she placed herself on the lowest step but one of her ladder, and they all talked about the island, and the sea, and George's recovery, and the new rectory, and other interesting topics; and Clary was so altogether bright, unaffected, and charming, that when George and his friend left her at length, the latter said, 'Melvil, if Clary were not your wife, I should make up to her myself!' And George actually laughed, and said he had better take care what he was about, or he should be obliged to quarrel with him; and then he extolled her virtues very much, as if—as if he were in love at last; but this time Clary was not there to overhear.

This was Clary's first occupation; her next was different. Perhaps the physical and mental strain had been, for the last twelve months, almost too much for her youth; for those who I've her began to notice that her spirits flagged, and that her brisk feet went slowly to and fro the garden walks. George watched her anxiously; but his friends told him to be patient, and wait a while, and she would be better soon. But it is so very hard to be patient when we see what we have learnt to prize above all else in the world fading slowly before our eyes—and so Clary seemed to fade.

'George, you must take care of Clary or you will lose her,' her mother told him, abruptly: 'I do not like her symptoms at all.'

It was after this harsh communication—for the mother spoke as if he were to blame for her child's face—that George involuntarily betrayed to his young wife how much he feared for her.

'And you would grieve to lose me, George?' said she, a little mournfully.

'It would break my heart Clary. Oh, don't talk of my losing you,' cried he, passionately kissing her thin white hands. 'Who have I in the world besides you? who loves me as you do?'

'I think nobody loves you as I do, George. It is selfish in me—but it is the happiest time I have had for a long while to see how you would be sorry if I were gone; I should not like to think you could forget me soon.'

'Clary, you will live to bless me for many a year yet.'

'That must be as God wills, George: let us both say, that it must be as God wills.'

'As God wills, my darling,' and George hid his face on Clary's bosom, that she might not see his tears.

Perhaps the covetous, watchful tenderness that now surrounded the young wife revived her courage and strength, for she rallied visibly; and, after a few months, George had to baptize a

little copy of himself, and to return thanks for Clary's safe deliverance. After that day nobody could have persuaded him that there had ever been a time when he was not in love with his wife, or when he did not think her the dearest treasure in the whole wide world.

There are three children at the rectory now, and it is one of the happiest homes that can be found in the county. Mr. Warene, who has become more cynical than ever, quotes the par as an ex-emplification of how well two people who are rightly matched in other things may get on through life without falling into that enthusiasm of love which hot-headed boys and girls esteem the grand climax of existence. One day in the confidence of friendship, he was so ill advised as to remind the rector of the confession he had formerly made to himself, and George was actually offended.

'Not in love with Clary? she is the only woman for whom I ever cared a chip,' cried he: 'you are under a delusion, Warene; I never can have said anything so absurdly false.'

The rector thinks so now; and Clary is converted to the same opinion. I do not see what Mr. Warene has to do with it. Bygone should be bygone. Clary has never yet confessed about that silliest of little tales in the thin blue magazine; perhaps it has slipped her memory—but all her love, devotion and patience of that time will never escape George's. If he knew who wrote 'Patience Hope's Trial,' he would possibly be inclined to call it a 'gem of fiction' now, instead of what he did then, because he would see it from a real point of view.

A STORY OF DESTITUTION.

TRUE PICTURE OF A SOUTHERN HOME IN 1867.

(From the N. Y. Metropolitan Record.)

'I did not know I would mind it so! I did not know I would mind it so!' sobbed Ellen Cameron, burying her tearful face yet deeper in the pillow. 'Oh, this poverty is too hard, too hard! And yet I cannot see dear mother suffer and the children want for food and clothing.—Lion and I work so hard and yet we cannot earn enough, even if I could get work always, which I cannot. God help us, for this is the last thing we have to sell, the very last.'

The room was large and lofty, and had evidently been in by-gone days the abode of ease and comfort. But now the once snowy walls were covered with dirt, which no soap and water could remove; the mantle-shelf was broken away, and the uncarpeted floor was stained and blackened. The bright June sunlight streamed in through windows, at least half of whose glasses were mended with thick brown paper, and from which many of the Venetian blinds were rudely torn. The furniture consisted of a bed, formed of boards placed on benches, a large box, which served as a wash stand, a plain pine table, and two very elderly-looking trunks. A few geraniums, in rough wooden boxes, flourished in the open window, forming the only ornament in the large, dreary room.

The girl, who lay sobbing on the bed, was thin and pale, but her face was still one of rare beauty and refinement. In her hand was a magnificent cameo brooch, and it was over that her bitter tears were falling. The head carved upon it was that of a Druidess, her high white brow bound with a simple chaplet of oak leaves. The beautiful face was full of a yearning, patient sadness, and the eyes were slightly raised as if in prayer. Very, very dear was that memorial of her happiest days to the heart of Ellen Cameron. It had been given to her in beautiful Naples, by one whose presence made the brightest sunshine in her glad, young life. She had fondly deemed that they would tread the pathway of life together, and very fair seemed the future of her loving heart.

Alas, her happiness was short-lived, for ere many months had passed, and within a few weeks of the time appointed for their marriage, her brave and accomplished young lover slept his last, long sleep with a bullet in his manly breast. They were all inhabitants of Beaufort, S. C., and it was beneath the Palmetto flag, that he fell on the bloody plain of Manassas. The brooch had been his gift to Ellen, and he fondly deemed that her sweet face bore a strong resemblance to the beautiful Druidess. Through all the war, while her other jewels had been freely sacrificed for the public good, this, so sacred and so dear to her bereaved heart, had ever been cherished; but now it must be sold to procure food for her invalid mother and little brothers and sisters. Her father had died during the war, and her two elder brothers both slept on the bloody battle fields of Virginia. Her mother was so ill that she was seldom able to leave her bed; and the entire support of that dear parent and four little brothers and sisters, devolved upon Ellen, and a brother not yet twenty, the Lion of whom she spoke. Day and night they toiled for barest necessities of life, but one by one every article of value they possessed had