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WIDOW'S STORY OF LOVE

Watched the Reflection of a Little Maid in Water

Grew to Love Her as She Grew to Love Me—Her Happiness Not for Me.

I am a poor, paralyzed fellow who has spent many years past in bed or on a sofa. For the last six years I have occupied a small room, giving on to one of the side walls of Venice and having no one to take care of me but a deaf old woman, who takes my bed and attends to my needs. There I eke out a poor life of about \$30 a year by making color drawings of flowers and such things as are the cheapest models in London, who sells them to a friend of mine, who sells them to a friend of mine. I am happy and content. It is necessary that I should describe the position of my room rather than above the water of the canal and overhangs the water, the portion being supported by pillars driven into the bed of the canal. This arrangement has the disadvantage among others—that I am unable to see more than about ten feet of the height of the house immediately opposite to me, although reaching as far out of the window as my infirmity will permit I can see a considerable distance up and down the canal, which does not exceed 15 feet in width. But although I can see but little of the material world, I can see its reflection in the water of the canal, and I take a good deal of interest in watching the reflections of the houses and the people who pass by on their balconies and at their windows.

When I first occupied my room, about 25 years ago, my attention was attracted to the reflection of a girl of 13 or so—as nearly as I could judge—who passed every day on a balcony just above the upward range of my limited range of view. She had a glass of flowers and a smile on a little table by her side, and as she sat there in fine weather, she was certainly an interesting little girl, and as far as I could judge from her upside down reflection, next in her dress and pretty.

She had an old mother, an invalid, who, on warm days, would sit on the balcony with her, and it interested me to see the little maid wrap the old lady in shawls, and bring pillows for her chair, and a stool for her feet, and every now and again lay down her work and kiss and fondle the old lady for half a minute and then take up her work again.

Time went by, and as the little maid grew up her reflection went down, and at last she was quite a little woman of, I suppose, 16 or 17. I can hardly work for a couple of hours or so in the brightest part of the day, so I had plenty of time on my hands in which to watch her movements and sufficient imagination to weave a little romance about her and to endow her with a beauty which, to a great extent, I had to take for granted. I saw—or fancied that I could see—that she began to take an interest in my reflection, which of course, she could see as I could see hers, and one day, when it appeared to me that she was looking right at it—that is to say, when her reflection appeared to be looking right at me—I tried the desperate experiment of nodding to her, and to my intense delight her reflection nodded in reply, and so our two reflections became known to one another.

It did not take me very long to fall in love with her, but a long time passed before I could make up my mind to do more than nod to her every morning when the old woman moved me from my bed to the sofa at the window and again in the evening when the little maid left the balcony for that day. One day, however, when I saw her reflection looking at mine, I nodded to her and threw a flower into the canal. She nodded several times in return, and I saw her direct her mother's attention to the incident. Then every morning I threw a flower into the water for "good morning" and another in the evening for "good night," and I soon discovered that I had not altogether thrown them in vain, for one day she threw a flower to join mine, and she laughed and clapped her hands when she saw the two flowers join forces and float away together. And then every morning and every evening she threw her flower when I threw mine, and when the two flowers met she clapped her hands, and so did I, but when they were separated, as they sometimes were, owing to one of them having met an obstruction which did not catch the other, she threw up her hands in a pretty affection of despair, which I tried to imitate, but in an English and unsuccessful fashion. And when they were rudely run down by a passing gondola, which happened not infrequently, she pretended to cry, and I did the same. Then, in pretty pantomime, she would point downward to the sky to tell me that it was destiny that had caused the shipwreck of the flowers, and I, in pantomime, not nearly so pretty, would try to convey to her that destiny would be kinder next time and that perhaps to-morrow "our flowers would be more fortunate—and so the innocent courtship went on. One day she showed me her crucifix and kissed it, and thereupon I took a little silver crucifix that always stood by me and kissed that, and so she knew that we were one in religion.

One day the little maid did not appear on her balcony, and for several days I saw nothing of her, and, although I threw my flowers as usual, no flower came to keep it company. However, after a time, she reappeared, dressed in black and crying often, and then I knew that the poor child's mother was dead, and, as far as I knew, she was alone in the world. The flowers came no more for many days, nor did she show any sign of recognition, but kept her eyes on her work, except when she placed her handkerchief to them. And opposite to her was the old lady's chair, and I could see that from time to time she would lay down her work and gaze at it, and then a flood of tears would come to her relief. But at last one day she roused herself to nod to me, and then her flower came, day by day, and my flower went forth to join it, and with varying fortunes the two flowers sailed away as of yore.

But the darkest day of all to me was when a good looking young gondolier, standing right end uppermost in his gondola—for I could see him in the flesh—worked his craft alongside the house and stood talking to her as she sat on the balcony. They seemed to speak as old friends—indeed, as well as I could make out, he held her by the hand during the whole of their interview, which lasted quite half an hour. Eventually he pulled off and left my heart heavy within me. But I soon took heart of grace, for as soon as he was out of sight the little maid threw two flowers growing on the same stem, an allegory of which I could make nothing until it broke upon me that she meant to convey to me that he and she were brother and sister and that I had no cause to be sad. And thereupon I nodded to her cheerily, and she nodded to me and laughed aloud, and I laughed in return, and all went on as before.

Then came a dark and dreary time for it became necessary that I should undergo treatment that confined me absolutely to my bed for many days, and I worried and fretted to think that the little maid and I should see each other no longer, and, worse still, that she would think that I had gone away without even hinting to her

that I was going. And I lay awake at night wondering how I could let her know the truth, and 50 plans flitted through my brain, all appearing to be feasible enough at night, but absolutely wild and impracticable in the morning. One day—and it was a bright day indeed for me—the old woman who helped me told me that a gondolier had inquired whether the English signor had gone away or had died, and so I learned that the little maid had been anxious about me and that she had sent her brother to inquire, and the brother had no doubt taken to her the reason of my protracted absence from the window.

From that day, and ever after during my three weeks of bedkeeping, a flower was found every morning on the ledge of my window, which was within easy reach of any one in a boat, and when at last a day came when I could be moved I took my accustomed place on my sofa at the window, and the little maid saw me and stood on her head, so to speak, and clapped her hands upside down with delight that was as eloquent as any sight could be. And so the first time the gondolier passed my window I beckoned to him, and he pushed up alongside and told me with many smiles, that he was glad indeed to see me well again. Then I thanked him and his sister for their many kind thoughts about me during my retreat, and I then learned from him that her name was Angela and that she was the best and purest maiden in all Venice and that any one might think himself happy indeed who could call her sister, but that he was happier even than her brother, for he was to be married to her, and indeed they were to be married the next day.

Thereupon my heart seemed to swell to bursting, and the blood rushed through my veins so that I could hear it and nothing else for awhile. I managed at last to stammer forth some words of awkward congratulation, and he left me, singing merrily, after asking permission to bring his bride to see me on the morrow as they returned from church.

"For," said he, "my Angela has known you very long, ever since she was a child, and she has often spoken to me of the poor Englishman who was a good Catholic and who lay all day long 'for years and years on a sofa at a window, and she had said ever and ever again how dearly she wished she could speak to him and comfort him, and one day when you threw a flower into the canal she asked me whether she might throw absolutely to my bed for many days, and I worried and fretted to think that the little maid and I should see each other no longer, and, worse still, that she would think that I had gone away without even hinting to her

to interest herself in my welfare, and there was an end of it all.

For the two flowers that I thought were on one stem—were two flowers tied together, but I could not tell that, and they were meant to indicate that she and the gondolier were affianced lovers, and my expressed pleasure at this symbol delighted her, for she took it to mean that I rejoiced in her happiness.

And the next day the gondolier came with a train of other gondoliers all decked in their holiday garb, and on his gondola sat Angela, happy and blushing at her happiness. Then he and she entered the house in which I dwelt and came into my room—and it was strange indeed after so many years of inversion to see her with her head above her feet and then she wished me happiness and a speedy restoration to good health, which could never be, and I in broken words and with tears in my eyes gave her a little silver crucifix that she stood by my bed or my table for many years. And Angela took it reverently and crossed herself and kissed it, and so departed with her delighted husband.

And as I heard the song of the gondoliers as they went their way—the song dying away in the distance as the shadows of the sundown closed singing the requiem of the only love around me—I felt that they were that had ever entered my heart.

Chinese Have Hello Habit.

"I had quite a turn when I went into a Columbus avenue drug store the other day to use the telephone and found a Chinaman there ahead of me on the same mission," said the man of experience. "Of course there is no reason in the world why a Chinaman should not talk over the phone as well as a Frenchman or a German or an American, but it had never occurred to me that they were enterprising enough to avail themselves of their prerogative in that direction, and I stood staring at the fellow as if he had been a museum curiosity. I had the effrontery to listen to his conversation, too, a proceeding for which I had no earthly excuse, for the man got his number as you or I could have done and talked just as intelligently.

"Even after he had transacted his business and had paid his toll and gone out, I couldn't get the apparent incongruity of the situation out of my mind, and I asked the druggist what he thought about it. To my surprise, he said it was not an unusual occurrence. It seems that there are three or four Chinamen in the neighborhood who have learned the value of the telephone as a labor saver, and instead of attending to all their little errands in person they send their messages by wire. So far

as the druggist can make out these men are all laundrymen. Judging by their conversation there seems no urgent necessity for communicating with their customers, but having once mastered the mysteries of the telephone, they seize every opportunity to experiment with its wonders, even though the performance does call for the expenditure of a dime.

"Since then I have made inquiries in other parts of the city where Chinamen abound and I have been told that once a Chinaman has learned English well enough to talk clearly and sanely he is extremely anxious to study out the secrets of a telephone booth. That step being taken, he develops a positive mania for this system of communication, and the proprietors of public telephones maintain that often they call up a number for which they apparently have not the slightest need, simply that they may indulge the telephone habit they have contracted.

"The class of Chinese does not include the well-to-do merchants who have their own homes, over which they transact much legitimate business, but consists of the floating Mongolian population, many of whom are chock full of modern ideas which, in their opinion, can be best displayed by patronizing a telephone."—Ex.

Danger in Wearing Rubbers.

A chiropodist says: "If a man has a corn, I can take it out and relieve him, but if he is suffering from what I call 'rubber fever' I can't help him and can only prescribe liberal foot bathing and a removal of the cause of the trouble. Rubbers should only be worn to keep wet out, and they should be removed the moment the wearer gets indoors. Failure to note this gives a man red feet in a far worse sense than if he had waded through mud ankle-deep. It was the trouble resulting from forcing the perspiration to soak the stockings and keep the feet perpetually damp that drove rubber soled boots out of the market. Even loose rubbers are a source of danger and the cause of many more serious colds than they are.

Good for Merchants.

The wind of yesterday and last night, while an ill one, blew good to the merchants who deal in woollens, fells and furs, as many thousands of dollars have been expended in these three articles in Dawson within the past 48 hours, one house alone having sold upwards of \$1,600 worth of furs coats yesterday.

LOST—A Gordon setter bitch, Sunday, Oct. 20th, on Bonanza creek. Finder return to or notify Walter Seward, care Nugget office. Name Browne.

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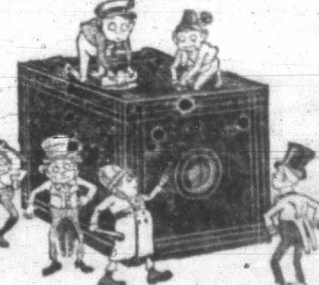
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