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## POETRY.

### THE "MIGHT HAVE BEEN."

Oh, a wonderful path is the "might have been"  
Leading off from the world's highway,  
Through vales of verdure and bowers of bloom,  
Through far faint breathings of sweet perfume,  
Up, up to a brighter day.

Though the world's highway is dusty and lone,  
The "might have been" path is fair—  
Fair and pleasant, and cool and wide,  
With lilies leaning on either side,  
And a whisper of hope in the air.

Up that mystical, magical path, I see  
A dainty white cottage—a home!  
Where a brown-haired, happy-eyed woman stands—  
My own little wife—with outstretched hands,  
Half beckoning me to come.

And why should I mourn that I have not dragged  
Her down to the world's highway—  
To walk with me in the dust and heat,  
With aching brows and with weary feet,  
Through the burden and toll of the day?

It is better so! My attic nest  
May be cold, and my ladder lean,  
But "My wife!" "Our children!" each precious word,  
With a loving echo, is faintly heard  
From the heights of the "might have been."

So I walk and work on the world's highway,  
Content, if God grant a sign,  
To explain why the radiant "might have been,"  
That came so near to my vision keen,  
Was not, and is not mine!

N. S. E.

## LOVE'S MAGIC CHARM.

(Continued.)

### CHAPTER XIX.

#### PAULINE THREATENS VENGEANCE.

"Pray do not leave us, Miss Hastings; I wish you to hear what I have to say to my niece, if you will consent to remain;" and Sir Oswald placed a chair for the gentle amiable lady, who was so fearful of coming harm to her willful pupil.

Miss Hastings took it, and looked apprehensively at the baronet. It was the morning after the ball, and Sir Oswald had sent to request the presence of both ladies in the library.

Pauline looked fresh and brilliant; fatigue had not affected her. She had taken more pains than usual with her toilet; her dress was a plain yet handsome morning costume. There was not a trace of fear on her countenance; the threats of the previous night had made no impression upon her. She looked calm at Sir Oswald's flushed, agitated face.

"Pray be seated, Miss Darrell," he said; "it is you especially whom I wish to see."

Pauline took a chair and looked at him with an air of great attention. Sir Oswald turned the diamond ring on his finger.

"Am I to understand Miss Darrell," he asked, "that you refused Captain Langton last evening?"

"Yes," she replied, distinctly.

"Will you permit me to ask why?" he continued.

"Because I do not love him, Sir Oswald. I may even go further and say I do not respect him."

"Yet he is a gentleman by birth and education, handsome, most agreeable in manner, devoted to you, and my friend."

"I do not love him," she said again; "and the Darrells are too true a race to marry without love."

The allusion to his race pleased the baronet, in spite of his anger.

"Did Captain Langton give you to understand the alternative?" asked

Sir Oswald. "Did he tell you my resolve in case you should refuse him?"

She laughed a clear ringing laugh, in which there was a slight tinge of mockery. Slight though it was, Sir Oswald's face flushed hotly as he heard it.

"He told me that you would disinherit me if I did not marry him; but I told him you would never ignore the claim of the last living Darrell—you would not pass me over and make a stranger your heir."

"But did he tell you my intentions if you refused him?"

Again came the musical laugh that seemed to irritate Sir Oswald so greatly.

"He talked some nonsense about your marrying," said Pauline; "but that of course I did not believe."

"And why did you not believe it, Miss Darrell?"

"Because I thought if you had wished to marry you would have married before this," she replied.

"And you think," he said his face pale with passion, "that you may

do as you like—that your contempt for all proper laws, your willful caprice, your unendurable pride, are to rule every one? You are mistaken, Miss Darrell. If you had consented to marry Aubrey Langton I would have made you my heiress, because I should have known that you were in safe hands, under proper guidance; as it is—as you have refused in every instance to obey me, as you have persisted in ignoring every wish of mine—it is time we came to a proper understanding. I beg to announce to you the fact that I am engaged to be married—that I have offered my hand and heart to a lady who is as gentle as you are the reverse."

A dread silence followed the words; Pauline bore the blow like a true Darrell, never flinching, never showing the least dismay. After a time she raised her dark, proud eyes to his face.

"If your marriage is for your happiness, I wish you joy," she said, simply.

"There is no doubt but that it will add greatly to my happiness," he put in, shortly.

"At the same time," resumed Pauline, "I must tell you frankly that I do not think you have used me well. You told me when I came here that I was to be heiress of Darrell Court. I have grown to love it, I have shaped my life in accordance with what you said to me, and I do not think it fair that you should change your intentions."

"You have persistently defied me," returned the baronet; "you have preferred your least caprice to my wish; and now you must reap your reward. Had you been dutiful, obedient, submissive, you might have made yourself very dear to me. Pray, listen." He raised his fine white hand with a gesture that demanded silence. "My marriage need not make any difference as regards your residence here. As you say, you are a Darrell, and my niece, so your home is here; and unless you make yourself intolerable, you shall always have a home suitable to your position. But, as I can never hope that you will prove an agreeable companion to the lady who honors me by becoming my wife, I should be grateful to Miss Hastings if she would remain with you."

Miss Hastings bowed her head; she was too deeply grieved for words.

"It is my wish that you retain your present suite of rooms," continued Sir Oswald; "and Lady Darrell, when she comes, will, I am sure, try to make everything pleasant for you. I have no more to say. As for expressing any regret for the part you have acted toward my young friend, Aubrey Langton, it is useless—we will let the matter drop."

All the Darrell pride and passion had been slowly gathering in Pauline's heart; a torrent of burning words rose to her lips.

"If you wish to marry, Sir Oswald," she said, "you have a perfect right to do so—no one can gainsay that; but I say you have acted neither justly nor fairly to me. As for the stranger you would bring to rule over me, I shall hate her, and I will be revenged on her. I shall tell her that she is taking my place; I shall speak my mind openly to her; and, if she chooses to marry you, to help to punish me, she shall take the consequences."

Sir Oswald laughed.

"I might be alarmed by such a melodramatic outburst," he said, "but that I know you are quite powerless;" and with a profound bow to Miss Hastings, Sir Oswald quitted the library.

Then Pauline's anger burst forth; she grew white with rage.

"I have not been fairly used," she cried. "He told me Darrell Court was to be mine. My heart has grown to love it; I love it better than I love anything living."

Miss Hastings, like a sensible woman, refrained from saying anything on the subject—from reminding her that she had been warned time after time, and had only laughed at the warning. She tried to offer some soothing words, but the girl would not listen to them. Her heart and soul were in angry revolt.

"I might have been a useful woman," she said, suddenly, "if I had had this chance in life; I might have been happy myself, and have made others happy. As it is, I swear that I will live only for vengeance."

She raised her beautiful white arm and jeweled hand.

"Listen to me," she said; "I will live for vengeance—not on Sir Oswald—if he chooses to marry, let him—but I will first warn the woman he marries, and then, if she likes to come here as Lady Darrell, despite my warning, let her. I will take such vengeance on her as suits a Darrell—nothing commonplace—nothing in the way of poisoning—but such revenge as shall satisfy even me."

In vain Miss Hastings tried to soothe her, to calm her, the torrent of angry words had their way.

Then she came over to Miss Hastings, and, placing her hand on her shoulder, asked:

"Tell me, whom do you think Sir Oswald is going to marry?"

"I cannot imagine—unless it is Miss Rocheford."

Eliuor Rocheford—that mere child! Let her beware!"

### CHAPTER XX.

#### CAPTAIN LANGTON DESPERATE.

A short period of calm fell upon Darrell Court. Miss Darrell's passion seemed to have exhausted itself.