

FAITHFUL THROUGH ALL

"I wonder if he will come," murmured Mary Shakespeare, as she pressed her face against the pane and looked out on the snow-bound terrace and park of Grandon Meadows. She was a middle-aged woman and still handsome, and for fifteen years she had been housekeeper to the Grandons. She had been waiting for the return of her young master now, and soon the jingling of silver bells is heard and a young man enters the library. "You have been to see Victoria's father?" she asks.

"Yes," throwing himself into a chair and still smoking.

"Angus—fifteen years ago the right to speak to you confidentially," she faltered out. Angus Grandon points out the low window. "You have the right to speak—but look there."

A tall, slender girl is coming swiftly across the snow-covered lawn. A beautiful brunette whose superb olive face is beautifully colored by the frosty air.

"How beautiful she is!" exclaimed Mary Shakespeare, with a gasp. "That is Victoria. Her eyes meet those of Angus Grandon and she knows there is no hope for her persuading him to give up Victoria Delevan. 'I might warn her,' she murmurs.

"And break your promise!" he cries with scorn.

"I know I have promised. Yet if I broke it I fear it would do no good," she says sadly. "You are right," she smiles.

"Better a great deal for both of you if it should marry Angus Annerley. Oh, Angus! before it is too late."

He rose and stood on the hearth with his hands behind him.

"Mary," he said, "it ever there was an angel in the body, you are one. Do you suppose I think myself worthy of your friendship? Not in the least. But I know my own needs and, come what may, I shall make Victoria Delevan my wife. No appeal will move me," turning away.

As the door closed behind him Mary threw herself upon the sofa.

"After all these years!" she cried despairingly. Oh, it seemed ages ago that Angus Grandon, at twenty, had been doomed to a painful insanity by the family physician, who knew so fatally well the hereditary tendency. They were lovers, then, these two, whose marriage was a few years the elder, and all their plans for the future were stopped.

All the gravity of the situation, with its remote consequences, was considered and a decision arrived at.

Apparently true in feeling, and aided by Mary's unusual judgment, Angus Grandon announced his decision never to marry, and to hand down to his posterity the hapless infirmity of his ancestors; but they loved each other, and it was not Mary Shakespeare's nature to love him less because she could not marry him.

Victoria Delevan came. She was beautiful, witty, ambitious; she liked Angus' admiration, and she drew off Mary's restraint, made her to her and asked her to marry him.

What Mary Shakespeare had suffered in the last six months only she could tell.

Perhaps circumstances would avert the catastrophe.

But after the conversation which occurred on that Sunday, Mary could have unfailingly predicted the end.

She appealed to Victoria, it is true, with a faint hope.

For young Annerley's sake she made the appeal, she said the girl was so noble, so good, so honorable in intention, and her unfaithfulness would break his heart, she feared, after his long year of hope.

"But he is poor," replied the handsome girl. "Everybody pleases for Arthur Annerley. I shall marry Angus Grandon."

Victoria Delevan, with her haughty stature and assured air, did not seem to demand pity; but Mary's heart melted to pity within her as she surveyed the prettiness of the girl, and she learned the lesson of suffering. For herself, she seemed to have won suffering out.

She had not broken her promise, yet she had cried every measure she deemed could avail, and she quietly acquiesced in the state of things, and when the wedding took place, and Angus brought his bride to Grandon Meadows, she pleaded broken health and accepted a sister's invitation to spend the winter with her.

Two years passed. Mary's sister and the noble man who her husband began to fear from their midst, so essential had he become to them, when, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, came a revelation.

There had been no intimation of discord from Grandon Meadows; Mary had thanked God that her four were not realized, when one day a lady arrived and asked to see her.

She was closely veiled, but she came and showed the face of Victoria Grandon, pale and thin.

"No wonder you hardly knew me!" gasped into Mary's amazed eyes with a bitter laugh. "It is really myself—not my ghost. Though I wish I were dead. Do you see this?" showing a livid mark on her wrist; "and that?" turning up her sleeve above the elbow to show a discolored stripe. "I have traveled two days to get to you. What has happened? Why, I have been beaten, bruised, and Angus Grandon is ravaging mad. Oh, you dear child in the last two years, I have been living all this time with a crazy man. He is insane with jealousy—of Arthur Annerley, you know, whom I claim to be someone. I have tried to bear it—I had my own way, you know—but last winter he beat me, and now he takes three men to take care of him!"

And she, who had been a wild, disorderly laugh. Poor Victoria! she was nearly crazed herself. Her parents were angry, and she had no home or shelter.

The butterfly friends of her girlhood were no solace now. They had money and jewels, but she was alone and forlorn.

"Oh, Mary," she cried that night, lying on her pillow, "I wish you would go to Grandon Meadows and right things. All the old servants are gone—Angus says I drove them away with my temper—but it is not true—the strange people there cannot be trusted, and I am alone, and I am alone, and I am alone."

Some orders better than they do, and there is no one like you to do everything that needs to be done. If anything can be done for Angus, you must do it. I will let me stay here until I am better. I have telegraphed to my father and mother, I shall never go back to Grandon Meadows."

Two months later Angus Grandon died in Mary's arms. He seemed to have no other friend than this long-tried one.

"You were right—you were always right. Forgive me," he murmured, and died.

His will provided liberally for his wife, but bequeathed Grandon Meadows to Mary. For many, many years the former was a broken woman, and in all her life her beauty and high spirits never returned.

Brough on the Maiden Ladies.
They have a custom at the Andrew Presly bazaar Church, Minneapolis, which has brought great consternation to the widows and maiden ladies. It began with the children and extended to the congregation. On each Sunday following a birthday the person who has thus shuffled off another year marches to the front and drops as many pennies in the missionary box as she is years old. It can readily be seen how embarrassing this is to many. They resort to all sorts of tricks to avoid divulging the truth. Sometimes a lady will put in over a dollar, and as everybody knows she is not a hundred years old, if she is out of the clutches. The missionary box is the gainer.

On a Yacht.
Oh, the breeze blow,
And the white sails go
Far out over the heaving sea;
And I rise and sink
Till I really think
It will be the death of me.

Oh, my breath comes quick,
I am deathly sick,
And as pale as a Chinese ghost.
Ah! the sea-king's fall,
Made me long for death's reality.
While the swift yacht flies
I heartily sigh,
And I long—how I long—for home;
And I gaze at the beach—
Far out of reach—
And I wish that I hadn't come.

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