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LOVE AND MONEY.

A TALE.

'Not at all. What did I care for wealth or position but for you, that it might add to you, and help you to advance in the world?'

'I allow you to say so, my dear good aunt, just to gratify yourself with the fancy, but I know well that you could not live unless you had the name at least of being a grand lady. It is your hobby.'

'Now, after all I have done for you it appears to be your wish to throw me off, and deny everything, Ralph. Besides being ungrateful, it is mean to have received benefits and not acknowledge them.'

'Oh, as to acknowledgments, I give them every day of my life, and I am quite satisfied to admit myself indebted to you for anything.'

'Say rather for everything.'

'Be it so.'

'I repeat, you have not a shilling of your own, except what I give you, and I also say it is shameful that I should be made a beggar woman for you.'

'I am fully sensible of that, and no one wishes more ardently than I to gain a position of independence.'

'Perhaps so.'

'Undoubtedly it is so, and if you can show me the way out of the labyrinth of difficulties surrounding me, I will be for ever thankful to you.'

'Marry an heiress.'

'Have I not been striving to do so since I first entered the army. I know I am well-looking; indeed, I would say handsome. I have a fine figure, good carriage, insinuating manners, rather striking face, something of the Spanish cast, dark complexion, flashing black eyes, well-formed features. What more can a girl require, one would say, but I can answer that they do. Their father and guardian may be deluded in some way about one's personal estate, but the young ladies now-a-days are so really inquiring, that they must and will know everything, and when they find out that you have no regular means whereby you can give them all they require after marriage,—dresses, trinkets, and I do not know what, why they leave you hopelessly. I assure you I have done all that mortal man could do to force Jane Melville, who had a fortune of fifty thousand pounds, to have me; but she had got into a knowledge of my finances, and when I suggested it scoffed at the idea, though at the same time treated me very kindly, just that I might remain with her to attract other suitors.'

'Tis a matter of surprise to me that you can't manage to bring about a marriage with some one or other, whoever she might be, even a fish-monger's daughter, had she money. Will you answer this question that I am about putting to you?'

'Well, it's any way reasonable, I shall.'

'Are you in love. You know what I mean.'

'Oh, perfectly. You wish to say, am I a fool with regard to any young, simple girl? Now you may be perfectly certain that I am not.—I'm in my senses at present, and I hope ever to be so.'

'So much the better, my boy for the full carrying out of my plans.'

'What new scheme are you thinking of?'

'One that I hope will prove like the opening up of a gold-mine to both of us.'

'What a perspective.'

'Well, I've little fear as to the result being all that you or I could desire.'

'Will your project require much time or labor?'

'Not much time I think, and less labor. You can do the gallant?'

'That's not difficult to any fellow in the army.'

'You can interest yourself in the affairs of a young girl, more especially, when she has a most charming face and confiding manners.'

'I can work myself up into an appearance of tolerable interest; but I'd prefer she'd know something about billiards and the like.'

'You can ingratiate yourself into her good graces, can't you?'

'No doubt of it. But come to the main point. Has she the wherewithal?'

'She hasn't, but her father is a man of great wealth.'

'Some old banker or merchant, eh?'

'He is a merchant.'

'I look with supreme contempt upon any one in trade.'

'But upon the proceeds of their trade.'

'Well, no.'

'You can fall in love with this girl?'

'Nothing easier.'

'You can make her believe you to be a paragon of perfection; you can work upon her feelings; you can lead her into the world, dazzle her with its glitter, almost frighten her, for she's timid, and she'll clasp your arm closer, and twine around you for support, having no other friend,

and then—then you can marry her at all hazard.'

'What if her most venerable and moneyed parent forbade the union?'

'He may do so, but she's his only child: and if you had but to wait until his death for her fortune, which of course will be all he possesses, would it not be a sensible venture?'

'Apparently it would. This girl is innocent and not worldly-wise, you say?'

'Yes.'

'Approaching marriage appals me. I should forego so many of my former amusements, give up so many of my associates, that I could scarcely think of it seriously.'

'Ah, Ralph, I believe as much; I could not suppose that a young man like you could be without some good offers. The fact is this.—Why you are not married now to some heiress is because you wouldn't tear yourself from your present free and easy life. You are so thoroughly soaked in selfishness that you don't know how to forego one gratification. You suppose that I have some inexhaustible fund, and that I can give you always as much as you want. But I am penniless myself, with no prospect of being enabled to keep up my present style, unless indeed you aid and abet me in this scheme that I have taken up.'

'Well, aunt, I have no objection. I only suggested the reluctance I feel in putting myself into the holy bond. But, as there's no other way to get out of our difficulties, I must be content. But who is this young lady?'

'She'll be here soon, I think; and then I'll introduce you. She is a constant visitor of mine, though our knowledge of each other is but short. She's only come from a boarding-school a month since.'

'A fledgling.'

'Yes; and she has the most implicit confidence in me; looks upon me as a second mother. Believe me when I say, that I love her as a child; she holds the highest opinion of my talents, and relies upon me in everything.'

'Excellent.'

'Assisted by me, you can very easily induce her to become your wife.'

'Is there not a possibility of her having some youthful companion to whom she may have pledged herself? Could she not have formed one of those attachments of which we often read, commenced in childhood, and strengthened in time?'

'I am sure she has not, for I have told you before she has but returned from school; and even if you had a rival, you ought to be able to conquer him.'

Alice now entered, and Ralph being the first person she saw, she was about to retreat; but Mrs. Aylmer came and led her into the room.

'Only my nephew, Alice,' she said. 'Ralph Seymour, of whom I have often spoken to you.'

'So happy to know you, Miss—'

'Morton,' said Alice, seeing that he did not know her name.

'Ah! Miss Morton.'

'I assure you, though Mrs. Aylmer has forgotten to mention your name to me, she has not omitted telling me many things concerning you. So that I have been in a state of anxious expectancy to see you.'

Mrs. Aylmer perceiving that Alice did not know what to say, took up the conversation for a little while, until the other growing bolder entered into it herself.

'You have been in London, Mr. Seymour?'

'Yes, indeed; though I am yet very young, I have seen a good deal of the world.'

'How agreeable it must be to travel.'

'Very, when one has some amusing company.'

'Have you been in Paris?'

'Yes.'

'I should like to go to Paris for a time. It is such a gay city, with its boulevards, theatres, music, and fountains.'

'It would be a treat. Who knows some day or other we may meet there?'

'Well, I don't think it likely.'

'Why, now?'

'Simply, because it appears probable to me, that I will never leave Cork for a single day.'

'A strange notion for you to entertain.'

'What, if we all three took a trip there in the summer,' said Mrs. Aylmer.'

'A delightful journey to me, I am sure,' said Ralph, 'when accompanied by Miss Morton.—But, aunt,' he continued, 'you were speaking to me about a ball that you intended to give, as my regiment is stationed here.'

'Not so much because of you, as for the purpose of bringing out Alice. She was never at a ball, and she tears the idea of being amongst so many; but that will wear off, having you as a chaperon.'

'Are there many high people living about here?'

'Do you mean tall?' asked Alice.

'Oh! no,' cried Ralph, laughing; 'not that, for a great many may be found over six feet in height; but that is not what I mean.'

'You must know, Alice,' said Mrs. Aylmer, 'Ralph is in the habit of mixing with the aristocracy, people who date their titles before the Conqueror; and that makes him look down upon the plebeians, as he terms those who have risen through trade.'

Alice became deep crimson, for she thought of her father and of Robert, who was her lover again, being only his clerk.

'But there are distinctions, my dear Miss Morton,' said Ralph, 'distinctions to be drawn even amongst those employed in commercial pursuits. There are many men obliged to have recourse to trade through force of circumstances, and they are often most respectable, and rear up most respectable families.'

'So good of him,' said Alice. 'He knows my father is in business, and he feared my feelings might have been hurt. So very good of him.'

'Well, we are to have the ball, aunt?' asked Ralph.

'Yes; I intend it.'

'Soon?'

'Very.'

'You'll invite your friend, the High Sheriff?'

'To be sure.'

'He's a bore. And all the officers of the barracks?'

'Why not?'

'Some of them are such low fellows.'

'But, never mind, we'll ask them.'

'Well, we will make the best of this, I hope, at all events. I don't care who's there, when Miss Morton will be confided to my charge.'

'So grateful to you,' said Alice.

'Don't speak of thanks, my dear young lady. I should, and do feel grateful for the trust confided to me.'

It was arranged that the ball should come off at the end of the week, so also the number of guests to be invited. Much discussion about Alice's dress ensued, as of course it was a matter of importance for her to appear to the greatest advantage. Mrs. Aylmer at length decided that she should be equipped in muslin, which was to be settled up in some way that could not but make her the belle of the night. Then her rich black curls were to be shown more perfectly by means of lilies intermixed with them, for Mrs. Aylmer said that a simple style of costume would suit her style of beauty better than anything else. Ralph knew something, too, of how ladies can best adorn themselves, and he was received into the council. It is natural that a girl like Alice should feel a little pride at the thought of being the most admired in a ball-room; and it cannot be doubted that such a sentiment had entered her mind as well as a great deal of satisfaction at having such a male friend there as Mrs. Aylmer's nephew. He was a gay, brilliant talker, with a smiling handsome face, and gaiety was a relief to her after the sombreness of her home. Could it be otherwise? How many could blame her for this? Few indeed. She was caught in a net that a wily woman had laid for her; who knows?—she may escape yet. But Mrs. Aylmer has no fear that she will, not the slightest, and perhaps she is right. It is a matter of little doubt her taking every precaution to ensure the success of her project, and we can only wait the result. Alice went home that day really pleased with her new friends, thinking them good people, and having an unbounded confidence in the sincerity of their attachment to her and her interests. She pictured the life she should have to lead but for them, and she was grateful to them. One older than she was could not have seen Mrs. Aylmer's heart, though being, as that lady would say, open as a book for all to read.

An artful woman is to be dreaded and avoided, but Alice was unaccustomed to deceit, and had not yet learned to doubt. She could not imagine that human nature could be so bad, so she was satisfied that all was right. She was very glad at the opportunity presented her of having a glance at a little of the world's pleasure. Saturday night the ball was to take place, and in the morning she apprised her father of her intention of remaining at Mrs. Aylmer's until the next day.

His answer to her was, 'I don't think it right or prudent that you should make such a companion of this lady. It may be all well to go for an hour or two once in the week, but to be so constantly at her house is, in my opinion, wrong.'

'But this place is so dreary,' objected Alice.

'It was never so to your mother: at least, she never complained that it was so. She remained at home, and did not go to parties or places of amusement, for she knew such things were most contrary to her taste. I am well aware that to some I may be stupid, that is, to those who have not had enough to understand what I am about. Tell me, miss, who are Mrs. Aylmer's visitors?'

'Generally speaking?'

'Particularly speaking?'

'Why, she is a widow, and though moving in

rather fashionable society, she is very religious.'

'Very religious, you say. Be good enough to tell me what her religion consists in.'

'She attends church service always. She is charitable, as you may see by the newspapers.'

'I have noticed her name in them often connected with homes for the poor and such like institutions; but you cannot take that as incontestable proof of what you term charity. May she not be encouraging idle, lazy, good-for-nothing people, pests of society, who retard honest, industrious men from enriching themselves by repeated calls upon their purse?'

'Why should you speak so, papa?'

'I have reason to speak. I know what public institutions are, and how they are conducted. I have experience of the hardships of those who live upon the alms either of the State or of the so-called benevolent. The funds are consumed by indolent, self-pampering officials, and those who are supposed to be fed are but nominally so, getting only what their overseers wish. Again, this Mrs. Aylmer may never give anything to these, though her name be on the paper as a patroness. Do not talk to me of charity, I do not believe in it. It is like many another lauded thing—a gaudy, colored bubble.'

'Well, but—'

'There is not the least good in keeping up an argument with you. You know nothing of the world, and you ought to be humble, and say so.'

'I know that Mrs. Aylmer is an excellent woman.'

'I don't dispute it, as I have not heard anything that would give me reason to grieve it. Yet, take this advice from me: don't be too confident that she is what she seems—don't open the secrets of your heart to her.'

'I have no secrets, father: and even if I had, I should not desire my confidence.'

'No secrets? That is saying much. Do I know you, Alice, perfectly? Do you imagine that I think myself, as your father, free to enter your mind and look about, search everywhere, turn up every stone, and look at the impression made? Is it so?'

'I can't say,' answered Alice.

'You could, child, if you would; but that is not what I wanted to know from you. Are Mrs. Aylmer's visitors ladies or gentlemen—are the ladies young or the gentlemen young?'

'Nearly always I have met old ladies at her house.'

'Very good. Never young men?'

'But one.'

'Was he handsome?'

'Why are you so particular in your inquiries?'

'Can I not assert my right to know everything that may concern you?'

'You are my father.'

'Yes.'

'And as such—'

'As such, to end the conversation, I tell you this: do not be led into any marriage without my consent. Young people are apt to be rash, don't you be so; for the choice of a husband for you lies with me.'

Alice looked alarmed when she heard these words, and angry, too, she was, at being so cautioned; but in an hour after she was engaged in contemplating a more enlivening object—the ball!

A ball is an assemblage of people met together for many purposes, known to themselves, but all protesting it is only for amusement. It can scarcely fail to be a pleasant spectacle; for wherever the human species meet to harmonize and gratify one another by mutual compliment, there must be many of the graces exhibited.

In Mrs. Aylmer's rooms were congregated old dames with wrinkled faces, and covered heads not half their own growth, from which sprang artificial gardens, or sometimes Marabout feathers. Young girls were there, looking out, not alone for partners in the waltz or quadrille, but for partners for life. Middle-aged men were for the most part grouped by themselves, talking about grave political matters, looking calmly upon everything around them, waiting for the supper. Soldierly-looking young men were sprinkled about; young misses slyly glancing at them, and maumas working all their might to attract them towards their respective daughters. Female parents are one of the great characteristics of a ball; they go in the capacity of generals, and it is rather an amusing thing to see their several manoeuvres to draw especial attention to their Fannys, Janes, or Marians. There were some girls there, too, not supported by any one, but relying upon their own dignity; these were of a literary turn of mind spoke quite Byronic, and wrote verses; they were not without male duplicates, young fellows not out of their teens, striving to look severe like aged historians, or in the romancist style wearing very peculiarly shaped collars and ties, peering into persons' faces in a short-sighted way, or staring with a countenance indicative of unlimited contempt upon all lesser creatures. Alice had en-

tered the room with Mrs. Aylmer, and sat next her till dancing commenced, when she was handed over to Ralph. As they whirled along in the animated maze, all eyes watched them intently—all asked one another the question, who can she be?

A striking pair they were, and though Alice was not aware that she was causing a sensation, yet, being in the midst of so many excited her much, and added considerably to the natural bloom of her cheek; whilst the music, the perfume, the brilliant light, all tended to increase emotions unknown to her till then. Round they went down the room, and soon the greater number of the dancers dropped off and left them nearly alone; and then some, whose curiosity was irrepressible, inquired from Mrs. Aylmer who was the Miss Morton with her nephew, a question to which she at first gave an evasive reply; but being forced, she answered that she was a young lady of great expectations, having a very rich father.

'You can't mean Henry Morton? they objected.'

'The same.'

Which caused murmurs of surprise amongst the questioners.

When Ralph led Alice to a seat, she was surrounded by numbers who wished to have her as a partner in the next dance, but she declined, being engaged for the night, she said. When she had time to look around her, she saw that she was a centre of attraction, and it became clear to her that she was a topic of conversation with not a few. This was agreeable to Alice, very agreeable; admiration was what she had always liked. She had got it from her mother, from her school companions, from Robert Power, to a certain extent from Mrs. Aylmer and her nephew; and now she felt that she got it from the large assemblage in the ball-room. Her pride at this was nature-born, and instead of making her look haughty or reserved, her face grew more lightsome, with her bright frank smile playing upon it. She felt more pleased with her kind, thought men and women better, feared the world less, threw away all thoughts of rocks and quicksands, and was wholly filled with the idea that pleasure was the business of life.—The ball over, and the guests gone, she went to the room prepared for her, and lay down to sleep, and perhaps dream of lights and fitting figures, adorned with all that art can provide to suit vain and capricious tastes—a dream in which it is very likely she saw all these figures making a circle, in the centre of which moved her own bounding about, and then some strange double-faced shadow came alongside her. Now, one she knew well—a good, honest-looking shadow—but a tall stool followed it, and some spots of ink were to be seen upon it, and a pen was chasing it spitefully; but a stately elm followed it, too, and in its branches there was sweet thrilling music, and little feathered things looked out from the leaves, and murmured 'Alice,' and they were answered by others who whistled 'Robert;' and thus they kept up a duet of 'Alice, Robert—Robert, Alice.' Then it changed; and instead of the tall stool it was followed by a banner, and the pen became a sword. Quickly it marched, with an elasticity in its step, and the people in the circle cheered and clapped hands, and bowed before that shadow; and Alice was seen by it, and coming over it bowed over her gracefully, and they both moved together, the elm receding, the song of the bird's made less distinct by the blowing of trumpets; but still seizing some happy moment, they would whistle out clearly 'Alice, Robert—Robert, Alice.'—Ralph and Mrs. Aylmer were engaged in deep conversation at that time in the room where all the fun had been so recently, and which looked now rather funereal.

'Well, Ralph, she was greatly pleased tonight; I knew it by her face.'

'You are a good judge of what one's feelings are by the movement of their features.'

'I ought to be, when such matters have been my study for many years.'

'But what is the programme of proceedings, aunt? I should wish to be perfect master of it, so as not to fail in any particular.'

'You have only to be attentive to all her desires, and leave the rest to time.'

'But somehow I think it is dishonorable to be trading thus upon her youth and inexperience.'

'How suddenly you have been seized with this qualm of conscience!'

'Tis true I am not the most candid person, and my life, like your own, aunt, has been a great deception; but Alice Morton is such a trusting girl, I have not the heart to lie to her, to say that I love her when I don't, for you know well that I do not; indeed I have seen too much of the world to be filled with any such affection. I think it all a sham.'

'If so, why don't you call her a sham as well as any one else?'

'Because she is not one.'

'Isn't it foolish of you now, Ralph, to talk of