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THE FARMERSVILLE REPORTER.

ELSIE, OR, NATHANIEL HOLT'S IDOL.

"I am so tired!"

The flute-like voice that uttered this pettish exclamation broke through the fragrant stillness of the autumnal exquisite melody, and Nathaniel Holt looked up from his paper with a frown on his bronzed, handsome face.

He was tired, very tired, after a day of hard labor on his mountain lands and had thrown himself into a great easy chair of his mother's, on the south porch for a moment's rest; and he could not understand how the speaker, a tall, supple girl, with hands as white as milk, who passed her time in comparative idleness, could be tired.

For Elsie Marian was not one given to unusual exertion, and generally managed to secure the good things of this world with as much ease as was possible or consistent with her position as dependent niece in the home of her mother's sister, Nathaniel Holt's aged mother, who simply adored the bright young girl who had brought sunshine into her old house, and whose helpless orphanage covered many serious faults.

At this moment Elsie was seated on a garden stool, half hidden by the drooping boughs of a willow, laboriously attempting to twist tiny bunches of dogwood berries and autumn leaves into a wreath, her dead gold hair falling about a face as fair as any lily that lifted its spotless brow to the opal sky, and no violet that ever blossomed in the cool tufts of meadow grass beyond the willow copse was as blue as the modest eyes she lifted to Nathaniel Holt's troubled face.

He stood over her, his hands folded on his back, and his broad bronzed brow flushed a little with some sudden inward emotion.

"Elsie," he began, the brown eyes that she dared not meet searching the face that dropped beneath his gaze, "what has tired you?"

"Nothing."

"You were once a contented, happy girl, Elsie, what has changed you?"

"Nothing." She spoke listlessly, yet a faint, sea-shell pink crept into the round soft cheeks and up to the roots of her golden hair.

"Yes, Elsie, something has changed you; you are the same, and yet not the same. You have lost your blitheness; you do not come to me with kind words, as you once did, Elsie, and charm all my cares away. Tell me why."

Nathaniel Holt sat down on the grass at his cousin's feet, and watched the color come and go in the face above him. He was terribly in earnest, this sober, self-contained man of 30, for this young girl had been his idol for years.

"I am not changed." Elsie tried to steady her voice. "I am the same today that I have been every day for years. You know I am 20, and I must try and be womanly."

"Has Louis Walton anything to do with the change, Elsie?"

Elsie's face blushed crimson, yet she laughed merrily.

"No. You surely are not jealous, Nathaniel?"

It was Nathaniel's turn to blush now, which he did to perfection. For answer he drew the dogwood berries out of her little hands, and held the slender little fingers in his own.

"I am not jealous, Elsie. You do not seem contented of late; you are always tired; you never run up the mountain path to meet me, or take long rambles in the woodland, so as to be near me, as you did. You see, I have grown so used to your tender, watchful love, Elsie, it would be hard to give it up. And I have thought you had grown tired of me, and had given your love to Lewis Walton, who seems a more fitting mate—"

"A divorced man, Nathaniel!" Elsie cried, lifting her eyes slightly, although her cheeks were dyed with burning blushes and her lips trembled nervously.

"A divorced man," repeated Nathaniel, looking her full in the face. "Yes, Elsie, there is danger of your getting me through him, for he is a more polished, more fascinating man; yet, Elsie, dear, he is as unstable as the wind, and not calculated to make any woman happy."

"You must think me very impressive," broke out Elsie, whose conscience was not as easy as it might have been. "When I gave my promise to be your wife, I meant to keep it."

Nathaniel Holt drew the golden head down to his breast and breathed a silent prayer over it; for Elsie was a woman, with a beautiful woman's love of the world's follies and adulation and he knew enough of Lewis Walton's character to know the arguments he would use, and that he would not be sparing of flattering speeches.

"Remember this, Elsie," he said solemnly; "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder, and, although the law has separated Lewis Walton and his wife, in the sight of God she is his wife still."

"There!" Elsie lifted her face suddenly, and held up her lips for a kiss; "that will do. I must go in to Aunt Eunice."

Nathaniel Holt kissed the lovely face, not once but many times, and and years after those passionate kisses were remembered with keenest pain. Elsie slipped away from him and ran into the house, and Nathaniel, silenced but not convinced, sat perfectly still, and tried to reason away his fears with knitted brows.

After that life went on much as usual at the Holt farm. Elsie was to become its mistress at Christmas, and her Aunt Eunice was very busy over the expected wedding. She loved Elsie with a mother's love already, and Nathaniel, as the autumnal months drifted by, grew a trifle thoughtful; for Lewis Walton, who had been a summer guest in the neighborhood, still lingered, and still called on Elsie, who tried to hide her growing fondness for his company. He was wealthy, indolent and gifted with a persuasive tongue. Elsie loved ease, lacked firmness of principle and will, and, although she imagined herself faithful to Nathaniel, her heart was slowly and surely being beguiled away from the true and steadfast love of an upright man.

(To be Continued.)

Sensible Almost to the Last.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Mulcahy lived on a farm. They were shrewd and thrifty and had the reputation of being "close." Finally, Mrs. Mulcahy sickened and was about to die. Finding herself nearly the end, she expressed a desire to put things in order before that event occurred, and old Tom prepared to listen.

"Tom," said Mrs. Mulcahy, "there's Mrs. Smith, up at the crossing, she owes me \$1.80 for butter; see that ye get it."

"Sensible to the last, my dear; sensible to the last," said Tom. "I'll get it."

"Then there's Mrs. Jones, up at the creek; she owes me \$1.50 for chickens."

"Ah! look at that, now, for a mind; she forgets nothing."

"And Mrs. Brown, in the village, she owes me \$2.30 for milk."

"D'ye hear that? Sensible to the last; sensible to the last! Go on, my dear."

"And—and—"

"Yes?"

"And Mrs. Roberts, at the toll-gate, I owe her—"

"Ah! poor dear! poor dear!" broke in old Tom hastily; "how her mind does be-wandering! Sure we've allowed her to talk too much entirely, so we have."

Leap Year Troubles.

He was a nice young man, with cane, high hat and patent leather boots. He strolled leisurely down Fourth avenue, puffing daintily upon a cigarette, and occasionally twirling the waxed ends of his moustache. He was accosted by a stout woman with a florid complexion.

"Top of the mornin' to ye, Mister Charley," said she.

"Good morning, Mrs. McGuinness, said the nice young man.

"Me darlint boy, would ye—" and she bestowed a bewitching smile upon him.

He dodged out of her reach. The recollection that it was leap year rushed upon him, and he answered:

"Madam—really—I can't—I am very sorry if I cause you pain—but my affections have already been bestowed upon another—and madame—I can't—I can't marry you."

She gazed at him in astonishment, and then said, indignantly, "Who axed ye to marry me? The idea of the likes of me, a poor lone widdy, wid four children to support by washin', axin' ye to marry me; I was only goin' to ax ye for that dollar for washin'."

He sighed, gave her a dollar, and walked sadly away.

Valises that Look Alike.

If the trunk manufacturers do not quit making so many thousands of valises exactly alike somebody is going to get into some awful trouble about it some time, and some trunk maker will be sued for damages enough to build a court house.

The other day an omnibus full of passengers drove up town from Union station. Side by side sat a commercial traveler, named William Macab, and

Mrs. Winnie C. Dumbleton. When the omnibus reached the Barrett house the commercial missionary seized his valise and started out. The lady made a grab after him and he halted.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but you have my valise."

"You are certainly mistaken, madam," the traveler said, courteously but firmly, "this is mine."

"No, sir," the lady replied, "it is mine. I would know it among a thousand. You must not take it."

But the traveler persisted, and they came very near quarreling. Presently one of the passengers pointed to a twin valise in the omnibus, and asked:

"Whose is that?"

"It isn't mine," said the traveler, "it is just like it, but this is mine."

"And it isn't mine," said the lady, "he has mine, and I'll have the law on him. It's a pity if a lady can't travel alone in this country without being robbed of her property in broad daylight."

Finally, the traveler said he would open the valise to prove his property. The lady objected at first, saying she did not want her valise opened in the presence of strangers. But as there was no other means of settling the dispute she at length consented. The traveler sprung the lock, opened the valise, and the curious crowd bent forward to see.

On the top of everything lay a big flask, half full of whisky, a deck of cards, and one or two things nobody knows the name of.

"Madam," he said, "you are right. The valise is yours. I owe you a thousand apologies!"

But the lady had fainted, and the traveler unlocked his valise with a quiet smile. Early in the afternoon a sign painter down town received a note in a feminine hand asking him to come to the Barrett house to mark a leather valise in black letters a foot and a half long.

Brother Gardner's Funeral Oration.

Detroit Free Press.

"Gentlemen," said Brother Gardner in a husky voice as the meeting opened.

"de cheer occupied by Brudder Ramba-

Smith in dis hall fur de las five y'ars,

am vacant to night. Three days ago,

as mus' be known to mos' of you, he

passed from airth away, an' ere dis he

am fur on his way towards de unknown

land. I doan' s'poe he war known to

500 people. Folks on the next block

may not know of his death. In life he

was honest, industrious, cheerful an'

kind. When he knew dat death mus'

come he had no fears. It was like a

man packin' up his effects an' makin'

ready for a long journey. De world

won't miss him in the least. It am like

a grain of sand bein' picked up from de

desert an' whirled away by de wind.

"War he ready? Jist as ready as it

he had expected it fur y'ars. His

Christianity was in his heart and not

in his sleeve. I nebber heard him pray

in meetin', but he left no debt behind

him. I nebber knew of his gwine

around an' groanin' ober de wickedness

of de world, but he war ready to sheer

his last crust with a naybur. He war

buried in a cheap lot, but in our hearts

we who knew him best will gin him

sich credit as money cannot buy."