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THE LONG, LONG, LONG AGO.

Faint from afar come the echoes
Of the long, long, long ago;
They whisper in the foliage
As it trembles to and fro,
Or swoon on the heart of midnight
As the wild winds come and go;
All, all the tender fancies
Of the long, long, long ago.

Alas, that we cannot recall them
In their early youthful glow!
Nor the faces of those who loved us
In the happy long ago!
They dwindle away to shadows,—
We know them, yet fail to know;
Fading, vanishing, dying
In the mists of the long ago.

Phœbe's Speculation.

It was my first case of importance, and I had taken it on speculation. If I succeeded, it would not only be a feather in my cap, but a neat sum in my pocket; if I didn't, it would be at the cost of a deal of labor wasted and a sound legal drubbing at the hands of Naboth Twyscott, who appeared on the other side.

The fight was long and bitter, but ended in a verdict for my client.

It was too late to put the money in the bank the day the defendant paid it over. However it was not a very bulky roll, being all in thousand-dollar notes; so I just slipped it into a secret pocket of my coat, where it would be safe till morning.

We lived, my wife and I, in a snug little cottage near the city. We had been married not quite a year. In fact, it was mainly on the strength of my expectations from "the case," which had then reached a point at which Twyscott was only fighting for delay, that I had ventured to ask Phœbe Harland to complete our somewhat long-standing engagement.

I had promised Phœbe so many things out of the case that I had forgotten half of them; but there was little doubt that a strict account of them was laid away in her own memory, and I feared that the sum total would make a large hole in my share of the spoils.

I know it was a mean thing, and I can hardly think what put it into my head, for I fully intended to deal squarely by Phœbe; but on the train homeward it somehow occurred to me that there was no need to hurry in telling her I had

got the money. It would do as well in a day or two as it would now.

Phœbe met me so lovingly, and had such a nice little supper waiting—just the dishes she knew I liked best—and was so chatty and pleasant all the evening, that I wonder how I kept the guilty secret, but somehow I *did* keep it.

I was awakened next morning by a messenger with a telegram summoning me at once to town to draw Mr. Banton's will. I hastened to catch the early train, which I was just in time to do. Mr. Banton was a rich retired merchant, whose patronage was not to be neglected.

Instead of finding him *in extremis*, I was not a little surprised at seeing Mr. Banton in dressing gown and slippers, enjoying a hearty breakfast. His illness was imaginary, and, as I afterwards discovered, he was in the habit of occasionally fancying himself in a dying state, when in reality nothing was the matter. I dispatched the business with Mr. Banton as rapidly as possible, and do not think my hurried manner impressed him favorably.

It was not till I had reached my office that I noticed I had on a different coat from that worn the day before, which, being a little the worse for use, Phœbe had strongly objected to my wearing of late. More than once she had threatened to sell it or give it to the ragman. She must have slipped another in its place the night before, and in the hurry of my morning toilet, I had failed to note the change.

I was a little annoyed when, at a later hour, my client, Jonas Swirl, called to settle and get his share of the money. He was a very suspicious person, and when I explained the change of coats and the absence of the cash, I fancied he looked just a trifle distrustful. Still, he said nothing, and went away promising to come back to-morrow.

I hardly stopped to return Phœbe's kiss that evening before running up to the closet to look for my old coat. It was not there. I tossed everything upside down, rummaged all the drawers, searched every hook and peg, but the missing garment was nowhere visible.

"Phœbe!" I cried, running down to the dining-room where she was busy

preparing tea—"Phœbe! where's the coat I wore yesterday?"

"That old one?"
"Old or new, where is it!" I demanded.

I'm afraid I seemed to speak harshly, but I was only excited.

Phœbe looked scared. I had never addressed her so before.

"Forgive me, George," she faltered.
"Forgive you for what?"

"I—I—there was a pedlar came a-long, to-day, and—and I exchanged your old coat—you know it wasn't fit to wear any longer dear—for a pair of the loveliest little flower vases—I've been waiting for you to notice them, but—but—"

My looks must have terrified her, for she burst into tears, sobbing out:

"I didn't think you would mind it, George."

Poor Phœbe, it was the first time I had made her cry; and after all I had only my own selfish folly to blame. Why hadn't I told her about the money?

Taking her to my arms and kissing away her tears:

"Never mind, darling," I said: "don't cry about the coat; but do you know which way the pedlar went?"

My kind words reassured her. The smile came back to her face, but the pedlar puzzled her.

"I didn't notice which way he went," she answered; but since you don't mind about the coat, what difference does it make, dear?"

I didn't care to explain the mighty difference it made; for I saw it would break Phœbe's heart to know the truth, and could do no good.

After tea I went out on some pretext and made such enquiries as I could with prudence; but though I had found some who had seen the pedlar, none could give me any clue to him or whither he had gone.

Phœbe was delighted with her vases; and of course I had to admire them too, though I confess it would have afforded me greater satisfaction to have smashed them over the confounded pedlar's head.

I spent a sleepless night, though I managed to keep Phœbe from observing my distress. It would be time enough to vex her with the truth when

there would be no other course left.

Making an excuse for another early start, I got to town by the first morning train.

I notified the police and spoke of advertising, but that would never do, the superintendent said. As the money was in a hidden pocket, the only hope lay in finding the coat before the presence of the notes was discovered. Whatever search was made must be prosecuted secretly. Giving the best description of the pedlar I had been able to obtain, I went to my office with a heavy heart. What should I do when Jonas Swirl came for his money? He would never believe mystery, and Heaven only knew what harsh measures he might choose to take.

As I sat with my head buried in my hands, and elbows resting on my desk, brooding over my troubles, I did not notice a man enter the door, to which my back was turned, and was not aware of his presence, until awakened from my reverie by a gruff—"Want any pens, sir?"

"No!" I answered, without looking up.

"Some ink?—some blotting-paper?—some soap?—some matches?—some

Not caring to hear the inventory finished, I turned to request the man to leave. But—I didn't. He had on my old coat, more attractive to my eyes just then than the richest royal robe!

"How would you like to sell that old coat you have on?" I asked as unconcernedly as possible.

The man smiled as one might at what he thought a very poor joke.

"Or, maybe you'd exchange it for the one I wear?" I added.

"You're hardly in earnest, sir."
"Indeed I am," I said; "I fancy the cut of yours, and here's mine—come, even up and no higgling!"

The coat which I drew off and thrust into his hands was quite new, and worth many times that for which I offered to exchange it. I was evidently taken for a lunatic, but that did not balk the pedlar's greed for a good bargain. The barter was completed and the man hurried off, probably fearing the return of a lucid interval in which I might seek to cancel the trade.

But I followed at his heels, keeping him in sight till I had searched the secret pocket, where I found the money all safe.

And I found it just in time, too, for before many minutes Jonas Swirl came as he had promised. Our settlement was soon completed, and each had his own share to do what he would with.

Phœbe was surprised to see me in my old coat; but when I told her all, and saw how white and scared she looked, I was glad that I had waited till there was only good news to tell her.