

POETRY.

LITTLE AH SID.

Little Ah Sid
Was a Christian kid—
A cute little cuss, you declare,

fields being the only human creatures within view.

Eleven o'clock rang out from the cathedral as she arrived within sight of her destination; and on hearing the sound she quickened her pace; and when she turned into the little lane, her heart was beating fast, and her face was all aglow.

distinctly refuse to accept this offer which you have made me.

"Oh, you do, do you?" said the Major slowly, giving his legs one vicious switch; "don't let's have any mistake about it this time; let me understand you quite clearly. You refuse?"

accost every passer-by, and did not even look after her until she was going through the gate, and some distance on the road to the town.

"Well, and suppose it were?" he said quietly. "Suppose it were?" she echoed; "well then, I tell you what, I would not trust you to do it. There is a man I have in my hand, once roused, renders me a match for you, long-headed and crafty as you are."

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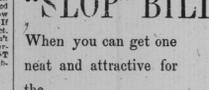
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SELECT STORY.

AN UNBROKEN PROMISE.

A CASTAWAY.

PART I.

CHAPTER VI.

A MEETING BY DAYLIGHT.

Her husband! The mere sound of the word sent her thoughts into a different current. Philip Vane was still the principal figure, not as she had just seen him, cold, sneering, practical and hard—but ardent, romantic and impassioned.

"What is the result of your deliberation?"

"I will tell you, Philip; but before I tell you let me say one word about myself, about myself. I have been thinking a great deal, not merely about this proposition, but about our lives altogether; and it strikes me that, for the last few months, there has been a sort of division between us; not expressed, indeed, but nevertheless existing, which should not be. Our interests are one, and our great point in life should be to carry them out by working together loyally, and in union. Do you follow me Philip?"

"Oh, I follow you!" he said, "it isn't time for me to speak just yet, while you are dealing in generalities. I am waiting until you come to the point, before I have my say."

"I have no doubt that I have been very foolish in allowing my fears to get the better of me, and in refusing to go and act in London. It must seem ridiculous to you that I should be wasting much of my time and energy in playing to provincial audiences, and in earning so small a salary. I can fully understand that, from what you saw of me two years ago, when I was concealing an engagement in London was accepted, she specially got the better of her weakness, and had not much difficulty in persuading herself that a happy future was yet in store for her. So, full of hopes and anticipations, she started forth soon after she had finished her breakfast. She knew that at that time she need fear no interference from Ross, who during the whole of the morning was busy with her various lessons, or from Miss Cave, who, after the ordering of her little household, invariably set forth to take her place in box office of the theatre, a position which just then claimed her attention even more rigidly than usual, as the season was about to terminate, and all outstanding accounts had to be carefully gone through.

"No, not in what you last proposed, I know; but you have said more than once that you wished I would go to London, and now I am merely willing but anxious to do so, Philip."

"It seems impossible to get you women to be business like," said Major Vane pettishly. "I took the trouble to come down here yesterday, bring you an offer, which I should have thought you would only have been too glad to have availed yourself of, and given me my reply at once. You demanded time for deliberation and I accorded it. Now, when you should communicate to me your decision, you branch off upon a totally different topic."

"Hurt, proud, and defiant, she threw her head back, and said with such calmness as she could call to her aid.

"Since you wish our relations to be merely on a strict business footing, you will find me prepared to meet your wishes so far. You ask me if I will accept a three years' engagement to travel with a theatrical company through America and Australia, you during that time remaining in England. Do I let the matter rest there?"

"With almost legal precision," said Major Vane, with a sneer.

"Then to the proposition I answer, No, no! See here Philip Vane: I came to you this morning prepared to my best to set matters right between us; to meet you more than half way; to give you if it were possible, even more freedom than you have now; and not to attempt to claim my position until I had made such a name in London as would render you not ashamed to acknowledge me. To this separation—for such the scheme really is, call it by what name you like—I could not have consented; but it might have been modified in some way, or if you had been kind and gentle with me, I—God knows—I would have gone away. But, she added, speaking slowly, and curling her lip, and looking him full in the face, "I will allow your hard bed and cotton sheets to influence your temper so far as to make you forget, not merely the regard due to me as your wife, but the respect which I should claim as a woman, I meet you on your own ground, and

CHAPTER VII.

GERALD'S LUCK.

The Dumpington turnpike keeper—a man naturally of a pleasant and social disposition, and inclined secretly to rejoice at the dullness of the life to which circumstances had relegated him—was in the habit of killing time by gazing out of one or other of the square panes of glass let in at either side of the toll house, and wondering what would be the next object likely to present itself for the relief of his monotony. The dust left by the passing of a flock of sheep yet lingered in the air; and the turnpike-man had derived at least five minutes' amusement in watching the manner in which the sheep had at first blindly refused to go through the gate, dashing off in every other direction, sticking their heads into the hedgegrove, bleating in a remonstrating manner, which was ineffective, perhaps from being carried away in one note, notwithstanding the shake with which it concluded, and in seeing them finally, after having been run over by a very cirrus rider of a dog, being hustled through the gate ignominiously on three legs, the fourth remaining in the hands of the driver or his assistant boy.

The turnpike-keeper, with these reminiscences fresh in his mind, and a wondrous smile on his face, suddenly descries a man of his interest.

This was a woman advancing slowly, and with wavering footsteps. Her dress was covered with dust, and her hat was crushed and bent. When the turnpike man first saw her, her veil was off, and her head thrown back as if to catch the air; but as she approached, she pulled the veil over her face, and seemingly nursing herself for what she had to do, tried to steady her footsteps, and advanced with a swifter and surer pace. With more delicacy than could have been expected from him, the Robinson Crusoe of the highway gave up his first idea of addressing her, but his custom, for the mere sake of hearing the sweet music of speech, to

"I don't believe in it," said Madge, bitterly; "but you cannot carry it out."

"There," said the Major, giving his leg a few persuasive taps, "there we differ. I rather think I can. You are my wife—understand, I admit that at once. If, to speak after the pleasant fashion which you have adopted—if you had been another style of woman, I might have been more reserved. I might have introduced a little innocent deception into the matter; have told you, as they do in novels, that our marriage isn't a legal one, either because the person was a postman in disguise, or that I was a Quaker, while she was a Protestant, or that I was a stranger of that kind. But with you I do nothing of the sort; I fully admit the legality of our marriage; while at the same time I bid you a respectful farewell!"

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this: that by a method more speedy, more efficacious, and less expensive than any known to your friend the law, I dissolve this marriage between us. And I will be generous enough to let you into my plan, which is as simple as is excellent. From this day forth you will never look upon me as your husband, or as my wife, as the French say. Don't ask me how, because I scarcely know myself. I may emigrate; go abroad; or join Wolf's company as the Bounding Brother or something of other. I don't know what I shall do, but I do know this, that you will never see me again. Listen now, Madge Pierpoint," said he, suddenly changing his tone; for Madge Pierpoint, who was once again, I have been talking in a light tone; but I have meant every word I said—every syllable, by George!"

"I shall do as you bid me," said Madge, with a sigh, and she turned away, leaving the man to wonder what she would do next.

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