

REACH THE VAN!

Reach the van! let not the rear  
Ever be your marching place;  
Foster courage, banish fear,  
Wear a brave, determined face  
Reach the van!

Only they, the brave the true—  
Nature's noblemen—can hope  
By the glorious works they do  
To reach fulfillment's widest scope—  
Reach the van!

Laggards, drones, and slaves of ease,  
Laggards long beyond the dawn,  
Ne'er the golden moment seize  
Which to grand success leads on—  
Reach the van!

Man was made to show his might,  
Not to grovel in the dust;  
Man was made to work for right,  
Not in sin and sloth to rust—  
Reach the van!

Ill may come, but ne'er so dark  
Was a cloud that did not hold  
Neath its gloom hope's cheering spark,  
Soon to glow like beaming gold—  
Reach the van!

Do your best then, use your power,  
Be content not in the rear;  
Full improve each golden hour—  
Be the first in all your sphere—  
Reach the van!

SELF-SACRIFICE;

OR,  
ALAN MONROE.

[CONCLUDED.]

After a few minutes' struggle with himself, he answered Blanche, if my home is always to be solitary, your memory will make it bright; for to have been loved by one so staunch and high-minded, falls to the lot of few men. And in my lonely hours my thoughts will bless you, my darling; and all women for your sake be more highly revered by me from henceforth. But I promise that never, in word or deed, will I seek to make you less strong in faith, truth, and purity, than you now are, so help me heaven!

He turned and left her—forever in this world, he believed—and over the agony of that night, which both endured, we draw a veil. Such misery has been known to many noble hearts, whom stern fate has decreed to sever; and the sufferers live and move, and have their being, as though the iron had never entered into the flesh, leaving an incurable scar behind.

CHAPTER VII.

Blanche you are changed! cried Alan Monroe, abruptly.  
He and Miss Aylwood were seated in the embrasure of a window at Grasse-dale, whither he had drawn her reluctantly from his mother's sheltering presence, who sat in a further room, divided by folding-doors.

Changed, Alan, yes, she answered wearily. To be struck down in a moment, as by death, is to wake to another life.

A life in which I have no share, he said, with a sigh.

Why do you say so, Alan? What have I done, that you should upbraid me?

She spoke hotly. Was it not enough that she was sacrificing herself to her foster-brother from a sense of honor and duty? Must she bear his reproaches too? Perhaps the very consciousness they were deserved roused her resentment. Her life at Grasse-dale since she had parted from Chichester, a fortnight before, had been as a month in misery, yearning for his touch and the sound of his voice, again.

There was a time when I had not to seek you, Blanche; when you would come and place your hand in mine of your own accord. Now, it is no mistake, that you avoid being alone with me.

You are grown very suspicious, Alan, silly boy! Do not make mountains of mole-hills. Let us go to your mother.

No, Blanche; my mother is gone upstairs. I heard her pass the door; and I am determined to let you see I am not a silly boy, as you have hitherto regarded me. I am not a big, strong fellow like Chichester; but I am not to be trifled with.

Blanche paled and started at the mention of that name. Alan Monroe continued: If you do not bring me a whole heart, I won't take half a one, Blanche; and I do not believe that I have even that, since Chichester—

For pity's sake, Alan, do not give way to jealous fancies, interrupted Blanche, or our future will be miserable.

It is to avoid that I now speak, he continued, gently but firmly. If you can vow that your whole heart is wholly and truly mine, I will not say another word.

There was perfect silence. Blanche's eyes were cast down, and her very lips were white and quivering.

"A faith unfaithful kept her falsely true!" He repeated, in a low voice, I want

no such faith and truth, Blanche. You are free.

You are very cruel, Alan! And the tears welled out, and ran down her cheeks. It seemed hard that her sacrifice should be rejected. He could not bear to see her weep.

Dearest Blanche! No; you do not imagine what it costs me to give you up. Here is my hand: lay yours in it as a token that your love is unchanged, and I will never wrong you by a doubt again.

But no responsive clasp met his. Only still that stony look of secret agony.

I am answered, Blanche, I have seen this sorrow coming upon me from the day I first set eyes on that man. He has robbed me of—

Don't speak against him! she burst forth, passionately. I won't bear it! Then, with a piteous cry, overwhelmed with shame at her involuntary confession she sunk down on her knees before a chair, and buried her face in her hands.

I am not going to blame him or you, Blanche, answered Alan. I have schooled myself to believe it was to be; and in the event of my death, which, I feel, is not far distant, I have willed to you all I possess, unreservedly as though you had been my wife. I have said to myself, she was as a sister to me; she pledged herself mistaking her own heart. God knows I shall not live to guard and cherish her and he has raised up another protector for her when I am gone—

one far stronger and more suitable: and I ought to be content—thankful that it is so. But I must be on the very verge of the next world to feel this; I am praying that I may attain to it.

Meanwhile, Blanche, hear my resolve. Chichester shall not have to wait for my widow—

"Alan, Alan!" moaned Blanche. He heeded not, but continued; Let the hand follow where the heart has gone, and I will strive to forget the old relationship between us was ever broken by an error on my part. It will not be for long, he added, in a low tone, and threw himself into an arm-chair.

Dearest Alan, cried Blanche, kneeling down beside him, I will never desert you. Let me confess that I have allowed my heart to wander from you. He was so strong and so good to me that dreadful night. He held me in his arms—

Hush, hush! Don't Blanche; with a look of pain.

But, indeed, we have parted forever; and I will never wrong you in thought even. Forgive me, and let all be as it was before. I will try and make you happy!

He gave a sudden gasp, and laid his hand on his heart.

What is it, dear? she asked anxiously.

Only a slight spasm, Blanche. There is no future for me; my days are numbered.

Oh, Alan, Alan! the poor mother— Ah, she will feel it! But she is prepared. We have spoken of the great change together. She is a good woman, Blanche; and you, darling, will never quite forsake her? You will continue as a daughter to her for my sake, even if—

Blanche laid her hand over his mouth. Hush! pray, Alan! I do not take my release. I am yours still.

He sighed; and, at this moment, Mrs. Monroe re-entered the next room. Alan rose, and, drawing Blanche with him, rejoined her.

Mother, he said, his sweet voice ringing quite boldly, Blanche and I have agreed to return to our old tie of brother and sister, without any thought of being more to each other.

My son! cried Mrs. Monroe, bewily-ered.

It is better, Mother, I am sure you will agree, upon reflection. I have long thought it would not be right for me to marry in my present state of health.

Mrs. Monroe nodded gravely; such conclusion had at times forced itself upon her mind, for she was a shrewd, sensible woman, but she had not the heart to wound her boy by the suggestion.

We shall both be your children just the same, mother, he continued. Kiss us and say we are right.

I cannot say I think you are wrong, Alan; and she embraced them tenderly; for thus publicly renounced, Blanche passively accepted her lover's resignation, and laid her head on her pillow that night with a peace she had not known since she parted from Astley Chichester.

Poor Alan! was her last waking thought. He knows nothing of a man's passionate love or he would not have given me up so lightly; and then she recalled the close embrace, the warm expression that had awakened the slumbering depths of her woman's heart—not recognising that there may be a greater strength of love in its repression and self-sacrifice than in its warmest, most ardent demonstration.

CHAPTER VIII.

You summoned me so urgently, that I am here! but I cannot conceive what you want with me, Mr. Monroe.

It was Sir Astley Chichester who spoke; and he stood in the library at Grasse-dale. There was a certain defiance in his tone, for he had cherished the idea during his rout thither that young Monroe had by some means, discovered the sudden growth of an attachment between Blanche and himself, and had sent for him to pour upon him accusations, and gratify his jealousy by a puerile quarrel.

When you know the reason of my begging this visit from you, Sir Astley Chichester, you will not require an apology at my hands. Be seated.

No, I thank you, said Sir Astley, shortly; I am not tired. I hope Miss Aylwood is well? He affected unconcern, but the effort sat ill upon him.

She would not feel flattered that you should forget her name, in so short a time observed Alan with a languid smile. But, perhaps, you know her better as Blanche?

The hot blood rushed over Sir Astley's cheek and brow.

Did you send for me here to insult me? he cried.

Nay—nay, interrupted Monroe, pacifically. I was wrong, forgive me. I will not try your patience further. I sent for you to do you the most generous act one man can do towards another; to tell you I know all—to give up the desire of my heart, that you and Blanche may be happy!

Monroe my dear fellow, impossible; I cannot accept such a sacrifice.

But Sir Astley spoke to vacance, and before he could recover from his bewilderment, Alan returned, leading Blanche, who started and would have fled at the sight of Sir Astley Chichester, but for her guides detaining hand.

Oh, Alan! she murmured, reproachfully.

Take her—she is yours, he said firmly! and he placed her cold fingers in the manly ones, whose firm pressure she knew so well. Take her, and be as kind to her as I would have been, had I been a strong man, with a long long life before me. I give you, in my sister Blanche, the dearest friend, the most loving woman, the best wife that could be found on earth; and as you use her, may God deal by you, Sir Astley Chichester!

He sunk down in a chair. The effort had been too much for his feeble frame—the weak heart was palpitating ominously. He saw Blanche gathered to her lover's breast, and with one sharp pang, a film came over his eyes, and he suffered no more.

That long, fond pressure at an end, and they turned to bless him for their life's happiness.

Alan! whispered Blanche softly, and she raised his nerveless hand. Alan; she cried. Oh what does this mean?

Sir Astley bent over him. He turned up the pure white brow. It means that he had a strong man's soul in a weak woman's body, and his noble self-sacrifice has killed him. Dear Blanche, he is dead! Let me fulfil his last wish, to love and cherish you to our life's end.

But he could not draw her to him now with that sight before her eyes. And then the poor mother came, and Astley Chichester quitted the presence of that mighty grief.

You have killed my boy! was her first hearty cry, but she soon softened again to her dear foster-daughter, and retracted her harsh words.

When you call me to your side I will come, wrote Astley Chichester to Blanche.

But not for a year would Miss Aylwood's respect for her dead lover permit her to send forth the summons. That year she devoted to the bereaved parent, and then she, too, was laid to rest beside her son.

That little word Come was all sufficient, and Astley Chichester claimed his bride; by his constant devotion and tenderness bringing back the brightness to her eye and joyous tone to her voice.

BROKEN FAITH.

Five o'clock! It was Hattie, my widowed brother's only child, who spoke, looking up into my face as she continued;

They will be here soon, Aunt Mira, and I shall see Cousin Lois again. She must be greatly changed since we parted in Paris, nine years ago. We were but children then of eight and ten, but even at that time she was so wild and wayward I was half afraid of her. I am sorry she is coming here.

Hattie! I said reproachfully. You would not have your father refuse a home to his orphan niece?

No. I am sorry she is left alone, and I will do all I can to make this truly a home for her; but, and Hattie sighed softly, we are all so quietly happy, I dread any change.

We may be still happier when you have a companion.

Perhaps. And a musing fit fell again upon Hattie.

There followed an interval of silence, broken only by the dash of the rain

against the windows, and the noise of the wind, as the storm raged.

I wish papa would come, Hattie said, as a violent gust shook the house. It is a dreadful storm. If Lois was not on the steamer, he will have his journey to New York for nothing. Did you send the close carriage to the station, Aunt Mira?

Yes, I answered, rousing myself from a reverie caused by Hattie's words of foreboding about our new inmate. Aloud I spoke no word, knowing the orphan would find a kind welcome, Hattie's gentle nature never allowing her to speak a cold or unkind word.

For twenty years I had not seen my sister, and Hattie had left her in Paris nine years before her death; but we both wore light mourning, more from respect for the orphan's feelings, than from any sense of our own bereavement.

I was still musing when the carriage drove up. Light rapid, footsteps crossed the hall, and Lois De Corriere was in the room. She looked neither to Hattie nor myself, but sank down upon the hearth-rug, saying;

I am frozen. Ah, this fire is superb. Hattie, come and kiss me. I cannot leave the warmth. Are you my Aunt Mira? I will kiss you when I thaw. Here is uncle! He will tell you about our journey. I am too cold and hungry to talk.

I drew an arm-chair to the fire for my brother, took his cloak and hat, and left the room to order supper. I could repress a bitter smile as I glanced at my black dress, for the young girl crouching before the fire wore plumage as gay as a tropical bird's.

Like parent, like child, I thought. Clara was a heartless, selfish flirt, and eloped with a frivolous Frenchman. Well, she was rich, gay and courted. Is Lois as shallow?

Later Lois explained the matter of dress in this wise:

My entire winter wardrobe was just completed when poor mamma died. It was so lovely and becoming, I could not put it away to grow old-fashioned, and I was leaving Paris. Besides, black is unbecoming to me.

When I returned to the room, after ordering refreshments for the travellers, Lois was lying on the hearth-rug, her face supported by her hand, her beautiful dark eyes raised to Hattie's.

You are very kind, she was saying. I will try to exist here two years. Then I am of age, and can return to Paris.

You like Paris then.

Like it! she cried, sitting up, in her excitement. It is a paradise! Do you not die of ennui in this dull country hole, Hattie?

I do not find it dull. Saint Hattie! Are you a saint still? I never called myself a saint.

No, but you remember the name they gave you in the school—the fair saint! Aunt Mira, you cannot imagine how angelic she looked among the dark-haired, sallow-skinned French girls, with her lily complexion, blue eyes and long golden curls. I was a little mulatto beside her.

The girl spoke with a half sneer, and I saw Hattie crimson, but the supper bell prevented any reply. With quiet courtesy my brother led the stranger to the dining-room, where her fatigue and cold seemed to vanish. She conversed incessantly and brilliantly, exerting every feminine art to fascinate her uncle, who seemed pleased but bewildered by a phase of girlhood so different from his quiet, dignified daughter. Lois was a brilliantly beautiful brunette, small and slender, witty, lively and fascinating! as great a contrast to Hattie as a gorgeous butterfly to a stately lily.

We had returned to the sitting-room, Lois again crouching upon the hearth-rug, when she asked abruptly:

Hattie, are you fiancée?

The rose tint deepened in Hattie's fair cheek as she said:

I am Lois.

To whom?

The question was answered by a new, hearty voice, saying:

Good evening all, and John Rodgers entered the room.

Lois gave Hattie a glance as she acknowledged the introduction of the newcomer, and understood his position at once. My brother, pleading fatigue, had left us after supper, so John was the only gentleman of the party. I think it was actual necessity of nature for Lois to flirt. Anything wearing masculine attire awoke the instinct, and she would greet the gardener and coachman with smiles never bestowed upon servants of her own sex. It was therefore impossible to resist the temptation to win John from his allegiance, and she greeted him with winning grace, keeping his attention the entire evening.

Hattie's face grew a shade paler as she noted the evident admiration of her betrothed for her beautiful cousin, but I think she never doubted his loyalty. Hers was too noble a nature for paltry jealousy, and John had been her lover from boyhood, her betrothed for two years. My brother loved the handsome, manly boy, whose parents were our nearest neighbors, and his mother loved

Hattie next her own children. When they were betrothed, it was but the natural result of the long intimacy, and we were all pleased, but no one surprised.

That Hattie had given her whole heart to her lover I knew well, for my darling had no secrets from me. I knew that tender, loving thoughts brightened the hours spent in preparing the pretty trousseau wanted in the early spring. I knew that, quiet and gentle as our Hattie was at all times, there was a depth of love in her pure heart whose strength and intensity could never be guessed by outward tokens. Lois had called her a saint, with an unspoken sneer. I knew how nearly the words were true. Unselfish, charitable, kind, she lived for others. She was reserved, but truthful and frank when occasion required.

It took me but little time to see that Lois lived in an atmosphere of deceit. In the most trivial events of life she seemed to revel in a cloud of mystery. If she walked, she stole in and out of the house like a thief. Every letter she wrote to her Parisian friends was carefully concealed until she posted it herself. She spoke often of her life in Paris, but seemed never to speak openly or frankly, as was natural in a young girl.

After the first month of her residence with us, she ceased abruptly to exercise her fascinations upon John Rodgers, and restored him as it were to Hattie, a changed man.

He had been the frankest, heartiest of lovers. In face and figure he resembled an Irish gentleman, with curling brown hair, florid complexion, blue eyes, and strong white teeth. His voice was loud and clear, his laugh rang out easily, and his very presence had been sunshine.

Now he became awkward and silent, seeming to seek pardon from Hattie for some unspoken offence, in his tender attentions and cares. He brought her books, music, and hot-house flowers, and seemed to have studied a new code of wooing, very different from the boyish courting of old.

The winter wore away, and preparations for Hattie's wedding were becoming more active, when my brother, one morning, called me to his library.

Mira, he said, handing me a letter, I am troubled about this. Read it.

It was a rough epistle, ill-written and misspelled, informing my brother that his niece was in the habit of meeting, in her promenades, a foreign gentleman, who had lately taken a room at the village hotel—a man who seemed to lead an idle life, the letter stated, and who was registered upon the books as Jerome de Villeroi.

Have you ever heard Lois mention him? questioned my brother.

Never. The name is new to me.

Stop; let me think. Ah, it is a misfortune to be so absent-minded! My sister mentioned this man in her last letter, and I had forgotten. Where is it? Ah, here! Listen:—

"One of my reasons for desiring Lois to go to America is to separate her entirely from a gentleman she met a year ago at Baden, Mons. De Villeroi. He is a handsome, fascinating, but worthless fellow, who lives no one knows how, and who is in love with—her money. Lois is willful, fancies herself desperately in love, but is so capricious that I think separation will cure her of her folly."

He has evidently followed her from Paris, said my brother, and met her here. Will you attend to it, Mira?

Attend to it! I looked at the speaker in stupid amazement. I knew he was absent-minded, absorbed in his books, but I had no idea mental abstraction could go so far as this.

What am I to do? I asked.

I am sure I don't know, was the reply. Tell her she must not see the fellow. I suppose we can't lock her up, Mira? No, of course not; for I shook my head, and at the same moment the culprit entered.

[CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.]

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