FIDELITY SERIES OF SHORT STORIES

BY SELECTED AUTHORS.

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THE GIFT OF ABNER GRICE

By ROBBRT BARR.

THE tramp leaned over the gate, looking at the trim garden and the homely little one-story cottage. The place was perhaps an acre in extent, and the cattage seemed very small for the size of the grounds.

A little girl approached, looking wonderingly at him, but her shrinking from him caused no resentment in the tramp's mind, for he was used to it. He accosted her with a whining voice:

"Who lives here, little girl?"

"Aunty Mehitable and Aunt Euphremia," she answered, gazing at him with surprise in her eyes, amazed that he asked what every one was supposed to know. Then she ran away as fast as she could, and the tramp, after watching her flight, opened the gate and entered the garden.

The two old ladies were sitting on the veranda when the tramp came around to them, saying he was in search of work, which was not true, and that he was hungry, which was.

The old ladies bustled about to get something for him to eat, and such a dainty little meal as they spread the tramp never before sat down to. Then they swayed back and forth in their rocking chairs and gazed at him with a satisfaction no less complete than his own, gratified to think that presently there would be one hungry man the less in the world; and they questioned him, one interrupting the other in eagerness to elicit the pathetic story of his life.

Patheaic indeed, it was, for the man, being utterly unhampered by truth, was thereby enabled to furnish them adorned fiction that went straight to their tender, unworldly hearts. He was a mechanic. He had been thrown out of work through no fault of his own, all on account of hard times. He had tramped and tramped searching for a job, and often, oh, how often, had been tempted to steal; but when about to do so the precepts of his childhood forced themselves on his memory, and he said, "No, I'll starve first." Consequently he starved.

When he sat back unable to eat a morsel more the two women consulted together for a few moments, standing at the end of the veranda and talking in whispers. At last they came forward again, and Miss Mehitable, being presumably the elder, was spokeswoman.

"If you think you could work in the garden," she said, "we might give you something to do. We can't pay much; but you will have plenty to eat, and a comfortable place to sleep in the outhouse. What do you say?"

Now, of all things on earth that the tramp wanted work was the very last. Still, circumstances over which he had no control, at the present moment, made it strictly necessary that he should lie low for a while, and this spot was about the safest he could choose; no one would think of looking for him in such a remote corner. He glanced over the peaceful garden and pondered a while before replying.

"Well, mum," he said at last, "I don't so much care about wages as I do about a safe home and good victuals. I'm not a great hand at gardening, being used to city work mostly; but things got a bit lively—that is, trade was dull, and so I thought—well—I'll do my best, if you show me how."

"That is all any one could ask," said the two in the same breath.

"I'd like to get another suit of clothes," he continued, looking down at his torn garments, "but Id rather not go into the village after them. I've been used so cruelly by folks that I don't exactly care abaut anybody seeing me but yourselves, and I'd kind of rather nobody knew I was here, if you don't mind."

The sisters looked at each other with pity in their eyes, which said as plainly as words, "See how hard usage warps the kindly nature of an unfortunate man." Aunty Mehitable assured him that he might live entirely by himself and need meet no one. There was an old suit of the gardener's in the outhouse; perhaps that would do for him, and they would pay the gardener for it when he returned in the autumn.

"That'll be just the ticket," replied the man.

"And now what is your name?" she asked.

"Abner Grice," he answered, after a perceptible pause, for the question came upon him unexpectedly and he had some trouble in recollecting the name he had fixed upon at the gate.

Thus it was arranged, and Abner Grice worked faithfully and well, with more success than might have been expected; he proved to be an ingenious and most resourceful man. If there was any odd job to do about the cottage, a boiler to mend, a lock to repair, Abner seemed a very magician with tools.

"I know your trade," cried Aunt Euphemia triumphantly, once as she stood watching him expertly soldering a pipe.

"Ah!" gasped Abner with a start; "what is it?"

"You're a plumber."

"Yes, mum," he said with a sigh of relief, "you've hit it the first time."

"Now, why couldn't you open a plumbing shop in the village next winter, for there isn't one, although we have water works here, and must send to town twelve miles away when there is anything to be done."

"I'd sooner open a bank," muttered Abner.

"What's that?" cried Miss Euphemia in astonishment.

"I mean I haven't the capital, and I suppose a bank wouldn't care to back me up."

"It surely wouldn't take much capital," said Aunt Euphemia.

"More than I've got," remarked Abner as he finished his task.

Spring blended into summer, and summer was wearing into autumn, but still Abner Grice worked for the two ancient ladies, and ate at their hospitable board, for they had insisted that he should have his meals with them.

In September he told them he thought of leaving them, but they begged him to remain, and he said he would until the other gardener returned.

The two sisters had been having tea at the Squire's, for they were welcome guests with rich and poor alike, and over their next meal at home they gossiped about their visit.

"And such a lovely new solid silver tea service the Squire has bought," Aunty Mehitable said to Abner, who regarded her silently. "Ah, that is what it is to have money Goodness knows how much it must have cost! I don't care for gauds or jewels, but I should like to have a tea service like that."

"And so should I," sighed Aunt Euphemia. "Perhaps if we saved up——"

But Aunt Mehitable sorrowfully shook her head.

"We could never, never do it," she replied.

All of which goes to show that we rarely know what good luck awaits us. The charming old maids were to have their hearts' desire granted when they least expected it, and that right soon.

Every night before they went to bed they carefully locked and barred their doors and securely fastened all their windows, just as if there was untold treasure in the house. In spite of these never neglected precautons they saw as soon as they got up one morning that their domicile had been entered, although neither of them had heard a sound during the night. There on the table, to their amazement, stood the silver service. In the sugar basin was placed a letter, which Aunty Mehitable took with trembling hands; and, after reading it, she uttered an exclamation of despair and let it flutter to the floor. Aunt Euphemia picked it up, and read it in her turn.

"Dear ladies," it began, continuing with deplorable spelling which need not be recorded here, "you have been good to me, and this is all I can do in return. The Squire is rich, and will never miss the service. Keep it dark for a while, for they will never think of looking for it in the cottage, anyhow. You can't give it back, fo rif you do it will land me in prison, and I know you wouldn't want to do that. I'm a burglar, I am, and a good one, you bet. I've bolted,so you won't see no more of me. It isn't real silver, anyhow, but plate, so the Squire deserves to have it pinched. P. S.—I didn't take anythink else, 'cause the Squire's a friend of yours."

The two old ladies sat down breathless, and began to weep quietly and hopelessly.

"What are we to do?" said Aunt Euphemia at last, leaving decision with the other, as she always did when things came to a crisis.

"We must take the set back at once; that is the first thing to be done. If we delay some innocent man may be arrested."

"Poor Abner," moaned Miss Euphemia, dolefully. "Then they will catch him and put him in prison, perhaps for life."

"No; that will never do. We must save Abner; and, after all, he did it for us. If we give the things back immediately, perhaps they won't do anything to him. We'll beg the Squire not to say a word about it."

Miss Euphemia shook her head.

"I'm afraid it's too late for that. Early this morning, when I first awoke, I heard the galloping of a horse, and I looked out to see who it was, for I thought it might be some one going for a doctor, but it was the Squire's man on his fastest horse. The police will be there now."

"Who has committed this crime, Euphemia? Whom should the police arrest? Answer me that, and answer it truly," cried the elder sister, with a stern, accusing ring in her voice.

The other laid her head on her arms, resting them on the table, and sobbed without reply. Mehitable rose and paced up and down the room, wringing her hands.

"We have sinned, and we alone. 'Thou shalt not covet.' That is a commandment as strong as 'Thou shalt not steal.' The one is printed in the Good Book in the same size letters as the other, and who are we to judge between the Lord's commandments and say that he intended the breaking of one to be more serious than the breaking of another? We coveted our neighbor's goods, and all the evil flowed from that. No one should suffer but ourselves."

"But how can we save Abner?"

"We must save him by committing another sin, and this should be a warning how evil leads to evil. We must carry these things back to the Squire and tell him we took them, and abide by the consequences. And there is not so much of a lie about that, for we did take them; it was our coveting that brought them here; you see he says he took nothing else; it was all for us. Then we must tell the Squire we took them."

"Oh, oh!" wailed Aunt Euphemia, shrinking from so terrible a confession, but nevertheless admitting, a moment later, the justice of it. "It is only right and just; but will you speak or must I?"

"I spoke of the tea service last night at supper, so it is I who should say what must be said to Squire Redfern."

"Perhaps you spoke first, sister," murmured Aunt Euphemia, with a deep sigh; "but I am sure I said the most, and I think I was the one who wished we had more money."

"We will go together, and if I break down you must help me. It isn't a question of who is most to blame; we are very likely equally guilty in the sight of the Lord. Now, we must tell Abner that we will take the whole sin on our shoulders."

"But Abner is gone. He says 'bolted' in the letter; don't you remember?"

"Oh, I thought he meant his door. We must see at once whether he has gone or not. Come along, sister."

They found Abner fully dressed, but sound asleep on the bed where he had flung himself after his night's work. The morning had crept on him unaware, and he started up and threw himself into a dazed attitude of defence when they came in.

"Ah, aunties both!" he muttered sheepishly when he saw who it was. "I thought it was the police. I've overslept myself, expected to be ten miles away by this time."

"Oh, Abner, Abner," cried Aunt Mehitable in anguish. "How could you do such a thing?"

"Well," said Grice, dubiously, "it wasn't very easy without the right sort of tools, but I got there just the same, and I could have made a rich haul, but I thought you wouldn't like it."

"How could you think ,then, that we would like your taking the silver?"

"'Tain't real silver, and the Squire's rich anyhow. I knew you wouldn't like it, just at first, but then I thought you wouldn't know what to do with the stuff, and so after a while you'd get kind of used to it, and then maybe the Squire 'ud die, or something like that, and then everything would be all right, don't you see? But I suppose I may as well give myself up, now that I didn't get away, if you won't hide the swag."

"No, you mustn't give yourself up. It is all our fault, and not yours, for we not only coveted contrary to the commandment, but we put temptation in the way of a fellow-creature, and as you didn't take anything for yourself, you mustn't give yourself up. We are going now to the Squire, and I am sure nothing will be done to you. You stay here until we come back—if they let us come back, which we don't deserve. But I think the Squire will be easy on us for old times' sake."

"Ladies," cried the burglar fervently, "I ain't fit to be on this earth along with you. I'll do whatever you tell me to do, and stay right here till the police come. It won't be any good begging the Squire, for he'll jug me sure, and everybody'll say he is dead right, but I'll stay where I am till you tell me to go."

The Squire, a hale and stout gentleman of sixty or thereabouts, received them in his library. He was visibly perturbed, but brightened as they entered and greeted them with much cordiality.

"Ah, neighbors!" he cried, "going about doing good with full baskets, I'll warrant. I think I'll become ill some day just to ge t you to bring nice things to me; indeed, I'm nearly worried into an illness this very day. I've got news that will startle you. I've been robbed; house broken into, burglarized. Such a thing never happened in this village before, which comes of soft-hearted fools encouraging tramps all about the country. Robbed! You wouldn't believe that, now, would you?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Redfern, we believe it. We did it."

"Did what?"

"We broke into your house and stole your silver, and we are very sorry, indeed, indeed we are," and Aunty Mehitable, her voice quavering, groped blindly round with her handkerchief under her veil to wipe away the tears which she could not suppress. Aunt Euphemia, hanging down her head, cried silently in sympathy with her fellow-criminal, making no effort to restrain her grief, for she knew such effort woould be useless.

"What!" shouted the Squire in bewildered amazement, first thinking the ladies had suddenly gone insane, then doubting that he had heard aright. "We saw the silver last evening and hankered after it," continued Aunty Mehitable. "We came at midnight and took it, but we repented this morning; bitterly repented, bitterly, bitterly, and here it is, Mr. Redfern; confession and restitution is all we—" Aunty Mehitable here broke down completelyunable to speak further; then the two aunties uncovered, each her own basket, and displayed before the astonished eyes of the Squire his missing silver plate.

"Oh, aunty, aunty," he stuttered at last, "how little you know this wicked world. Why, the police say it was the work of one of the most expert burglars in the country."

"He was always handy with tools," sighed Aunt Euphemia, forgetting herself. Her sister darted a look of reproach at her, then tremulously to the Squire, she said:

"It is a very serious matter, Mr. Redfern; I wish you wouldn't laugh."

"How can I help it, aunty? Where did you go after you broke into the kitchen and how did you open the china closet door, for it was locked this morning and did not show a scratch? And, then, how did you get into the wine cellar? And how could you, whom I have always thought a temperance woman, never tasting anything stronger than tea, select the very best bottle I had in my bins, break the neck off it with a neatness I never saw equalled and drink it all? And how you and Miss Euphemia must have staggered as you went across the lawn, not under the weight of the silver, but under the weight of that most potent bottle of wine!"

Here the Squire collapsed into his armchair and shook with uncontrolled merriment at the picture he had drawn, while the two women looked at each other with dismay, evidently fearing they had, in some unexplainable way, bungled the confession.

When the Squire had partially recovered his composure, he said:—"Whom are you shielding, aunty, and how did you come to know of this burglary? What scoundrel has crept his way into your tender and unsophisticated sympathies? You think you are going to reform him, of course, and that people have been hard on him, and all that sort of thing; but nothing will reform such a person except the jail. Where is he hiding?"

After a few minutes the Squire was in possession of the whole story—from the time the tramp first appeared famished at the verandah until the last hour when they left him repentant and deeply despondent sitting on his bed in the outhouse—Aunty Mehitable relating, and Aunt Euphemia eagerly interjecting little remarks which told in the culprit's favor as the narrative continued.

The Squire shook his head.

"I don't much believe in the reformation of such characters It was not contrition that you noticed in him this morning, but the effects of drink The fellow didn't oversleep himself, tired after an industrious night's work, as you imagine; he threw himself down in drunken stupor, for a bottle of that wine is enough to intoxicate an elephant. As for his alleged desire to become a plumber—well, from burglary to plumbing isn't a mighty advance toward honesty; still it is perhaps a step in the right direction, I'll do my best. I'll enter the noble band of fictionists—for your sake, mind not for his—and will tell the police the silver had been mislaid and has been found again. That will sound fishy enough, but I will send them a nice check for what they have done, and so, perhaps, nothing will be said. Now, I don't believe we shall find the fellow when we go to the outhouse; he'll have made himself very scarce in spite of his promise. Still I'll go over with you and see. Meanwhile this will be a secret between us three."

"You won't be harsh with him, will you, Mr. Redfern?"

"I'll be as mild as new milk—if he's there, which I doubt"

The two ladies with their empty baskets returned to the cottage, and entered in fear and trembling while the Squire, a stout stick in his hand, strode to the outhouse. To his surprise he found Abner Grice still there, sitting on the bed, with his head in his hands (aching, no doubt, thought the Squire).

"Well, you scoundrel, you arrant knave, slinking here under the protection of two innocent, confiding women, when you ought to be wearing striped clothing in prison! What have you to say for yourself, you rascal?"

"Go on, go on," growled Abner, without looking up. "That's the kind of talk I've had a great deal of in my time."

"In your time! Doing time is what you deserve. You thieving loafer, bamboozling two lone women, getting them to stand between you and the consequences of your crime. It is my duty to turn you over to the police. What have you to say against it?"

Abner Grice sprang to his feet, his fists clinched, all the lower animalism of his nature, glaring from his bloodshot eyes.

"What have I to say?" he roared. "I have to say that you are a liar! You never would have been standing there—you never would have known I was here if you hadn't lied to them ladies and told 'em you wouldn't do anything. I know 'em. They'd gone to jail themselves first before they'd a-rounded on me. Don't you threaten me with your stick, or I'll break your neck down the stair."

"None of that, my man," cried the Squire, backing away from him. "I've come to help you, if you will keep a civil tongue in your head."

"I don't want your help. I'm one kind of a thief, and you're another. You steal according to law, and I don't; that's all the difference. I've lived with these real Christian ladies nearly six months, and have done my work as well as I know how. Not a day passed but they had something nice to say about the Squire, what a good man he was; what fine things he said; how kind he was, and all that, till I was so sick of you I had to come out here to swear. You with your income bigger than all they own, having as much money in a week as they have in year, what have you done for them? Is there a stick in their cottage you gave them? You saw them, year in and year out, go past your door, bringing things to the sick and poor, and when they came to you and begged for others, you put your hand in your pocket, and they thought you were generous! You fat, old, stingy, puffing grumpus! What present have you ever given to them?"

"But, my dear man," stammered the Squire, taken aback, "you don't understand. The Misses Bassett are ladies. You can't give alms to a lady."

"A real gentleman would have found a way, if he wasn't all solid selfishness. What did the bottle of wine I drank cost you? And there are hundreds in your cellar, all for your own gullet. A gentleman would have bought something nice—china, a desk, a little cabinet, something of silver or gold that they couldn't give away—something pretty and useless, that ladies like, and he would have said: 'Miss Euphemia, or Miss Mehitable, to-day is your birthday and here's a little trinket just to show we ain't forgotten you.' That's what a gentleman would a-done. The poor can't give, and the rich don't think. There isn't anything in that little cottage that them ladies can point to, with tears in their eyes (as here would be, for they think everybody's good), and say, 'The Squire, bless 'im, gave us—'"

"Hold on, hold on," cried the Squire, with a gulp in his throat, dropping his stick and placing a hand on the other's shoulder. "Don't say another word, and forgive me for the way I spoke to you. Let's talk business. Answer me this: Is burglary like drink? Can you keep your hands off things if you are in the way of temptation, or can't you?"

"Well, Squire," said the man, mollified, but lowering suspiciously at him, "I might have cut your throat last night as you lay snoring fit to wake the dead, but—"

"Not snoring!" cried the Squire, quick anger rising to the surface again. "I never snore."

"It led me up from the basement like a fog horn. I took the keys from your trousers pocket, as I ain't got my skeleton kit along, and so got into the cellar and the china closet. There was money in your pocket and a watch in your vest. I let 'em stay there."

"That's all right. I'll be your financial backer and will set you up in business where you can make honest money. Are you willing?"

"I haven't had any too much money, either honest or dishonest, this while back. I'd like to try and earn a little."

"Then, that's a bargain. And now, if you prosper, you and I will buy a real silver service, and we'll present it to the aunties on the next birthday that comes to the cottage. I'd buy it myself but I think they will treasure it more coming from two fools than from one. What do you say?"

"I'll be the other fool, Squire," said Abner with a reluctant grin.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

By CECILIA A. LOIZEAUX

THE window curtains of the tiny a tiny fire crackled and burned sitting room were close dr in the grate. The glow from a red-shaded lamp mingled with the firelight and showed to the best advantage the very different types of beauty belonging to the two girls who were waiting for callers.

"You see," said Marian Wilding, as she poked rather gingerly at the blazing sticks, "you've never really told me why you turned down that Duluth man. Why did you? And why are you engaged to an unknown New Yorker? The Duluth man was a dear and awfully in love with you." Alicia chuckled.

"Well, it's quite a tale. I guess I will tell you." She looked contemplatively at Marian. "You see, Mrs. Fate, the 'bounteous blind dame,' did mightily displace her gifts to us. She made a funny mixture of you and me. With all your height and brownness and toplofiness, you're meek as a kitten at heart, and all any man will have to do to get you will be to kill a garter snake before your admiring gaze or save you from drowning in two feet of water. But I, with my yellow mop and dimples and girly-girly appearance, am not to be taken by any tricks masculine. I want a Man, such a one as we read of and seldom see."

"Well, wasn't that Duluth mortal a man? He was six feet tall, and his shoulders were immense."

"A proper man's figure, I grant, and I really thought I'd found the Man till that night. Well, turn down the light—I'll get it over with," She drew both feet up into the big leather chair leaned her head into the shadow and thought awhile.

"You really knew him, did you?" she asked suddenly.

"No; I was at Pratt's that Winter. But Polly told me about it. She said you'd turned him down."

"I thought so—and Polly ought to know. She knew more about his downsittings and his up-risings than he did himself. But—well, that was the first winter after papa lost his money, you know. We were living out on the electric line between St. Paul and Minneapolis after our house was sold. It was a cunning little place, but horrid to get to. We hadn't any horse, and went back and forth on the trolleys. I must say he—the man—was a trump about such things. He never rubbed things in the least bit. He was establishing a side branch for his company in the city, and was awfully rich. But he never made the mistake of acting as if things were—well—different. You see, he met me while we were still in the big house, before wheat took a flop at the wrong time. I had all my clothes left, and I looked nice that winter. He took me anywhere there was to go—theatres, concerts, skating—everywhere. Oh, it was a dream!" She sighed, and was silent a moment. "But toward spring he got to be a sort of Sentimental Tommy, and it took all my native wit and my girlish gullelessness to stave him off."

"But what did you want to stave him off for?"

"I didn't know any better. He was big and strong and brave, and I felt that I'd have to give in to him sooner or later, but—well, I wanted him to show me. His siege was perfectly awful toward the last; I was under fire all the time. There was simply nothing that man didn't do for me, and all so delicately that I simply couldn't help myself. Finally he—well, he did—the usual thing. He asked me in a manly, point-blank way to marry him." Marian stirred the fire vigorously, hoping to catch a glimpse of Alicia's face. The attempt was futile.

"I kind of wanted to take him up, but you see it was largely pride with me at first. And papa and mamma, bless their scheming, wanted me to be safely settled. He seemed to be just the right one. But I knew that every old gossip, like Polly, would say it was because he was rich, and then I really didn't love him, though at that time I didn't know enough to know the difference. Now"—she extended a pretty left hand and let a diamond sparkle in the firelight. Then she went on. "So I told him I wanted him to prove his love some way, to perform some valorous feat or other, something to make me love him. Perfectly silly, of course. But he was just that kind—he was sure he could do miracles—for me! And he actually bought and showed me a ring which he carried around on his watch chain, he was so confident. But, do you know, the whole spring and summer went by, and nothing thrilling would happen! I refused to drown, absolutely. It took some time to convince him that I could swim like a mermaid. He was wild to teach me, so I let him try. After I had been hopelessly clumsy for six weeks I dived one day under his very nose and swam away under water.

"And there seemed to be no bears in the woods, no rattlesnakes in the fields where we picnicked. He was getting desperate, poor man. I teased him and trembled inwardly, because I knew that sometime something was going to happen, and I was beginning to believe myself really in love with him. But still, where we two were concerned, everything was plain prose. Others were tipped into the lake, dumped over stone walls by bucking autos, killed while coasting, but not I. And the man—he got to proposing every time we went anywhere, and I got so used to it that I'd refuse as unemotionally as I woud an ice-cream soda in December. Then one dark night we were coming home from a little restaurant dinner a crowd of us had had at Green's—you remember the Greens, don't you?"

Marian nodded.

"Well, it was pitch dark. I felt positively spooky when I stepped off the car. We had to pass a little strip of woods, I think I'll never get that out of my mind!" She sat upright, her hands clasped tightly in her lap. "You know that little near-sighted trick the man had of holding his chin down as he talked?—boyish little mannerism?" Marian never had even seen him, but she made no sign. "Well, we walked along, chatting. When we reached about the middle of that stretch of woods I saw two men standing rather queerly, one in front of the other at the edge of the sidewalk. I kind of grabbed the man's arm and he thought I wanted him to speak to some one he hadn't seen, and took off his hat. It was funny, because they stepped up in front of us and answered as polite bow by shoving a gun in his face and telling him to hold up his hands."

She stopped, and after waiting awhile for her to continue, Marian said:

"Well, did he?"

"Why, you know, it never occured to me that he wouldn't. There were two of them—and they swore terrribly! But that man! He had on a long ulster with deep pockets, and he rammed his hands way down into these pockets, and said in the most rediculously calm voice, 'I won't!' The men were so surprised they nearly dropped. I wasn't a bit afraid. All I could think of was that the man must hold up his hands or he'd get hurt. So I just danced round him saying, 'Hold up your hands! I said, 'please.' I called him 'dear' and 'fool' and 'idiot.' But he just said 'I won't!' and kind of moved forward. Of course, the hold-up man didn't want to shoot very badly, and he thought the man would give in, so he backed up as the man moved forward. The other man walked behind with me."

She laughed as she remembered, till Marian said sharply: "'Well, go on!'"

"Well, we walked and I screamed. Pretty soon we got almost to the gate of the first house; we lived in the third. Then I saw what the man was up to and felt so ashamed of my silly squealing. I started to sprint, thinking that I would ring the door bell of the first house and get help, but the second man caught me. And then he seemed to get a kind of signal from the other one, for he let go of me all of a sudden and jumped right on the man's back. And then the gun went off. It was the most awful sound I ever heard. I sat down on the sidewalk for a minute.

"Well, when I came to, my brother Bob was there, and a whole crowd of neighbors—they'd heard the shot and had run out just in time to see the men run away through the woods—and everybody was talking at once. The shot hadn't hit any one, but they thought I was the victim and the man was having a serious time. But just as soon as he found out I was all right, he and that silly Bob wanted to go off and chase those desperate men. But I wouldn't let him go. I told Bob he could go alone if he wanted to, and I cried like such a little fool that it tickled his vanity, and he stayed. I thought he'd been brave enough, and I guess I told him that I was ready to hold up my hands, or some such thing, for he seemed awfully glad all of a sudden."

She stopped, and Marian, waiting for the end, asked finally.,

"Well, what's all this to do with your turning him down?"

"Everything in the world," said Alicia, complacently. "I didn't!" Then she laughed delightedly. "You see, I've been engaged to him ever since. He came to New York because there was more business here. And you see if I don't get even with that Polly for telling around that I refused him!"

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RICHEST WOMAN IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Lady Mary Hamilton, only daughter of the late Duke of Hamilton, is the richest heiress in Great Britain.

When the Duke died in 1895 it was found that his daughter inherited not only a considerable sum of money, but his large estates in the Isle of Arran and at Wickham Market. On the former of these estates Lady Mary has lived a simple country life for many years past, coming very little to London, devoted to her mother (who was Lady Mary Montagu, eldest daughter of the seventh Duke of Manchester), and intimately acquainted with all the affairs and most of the tenants of her great Scotch property. Moreover, Lady Mary Hamilton is a famous sportswoman, and one of the very few women to undertake the duties of master of hounds.

Lady Mary Hamilton's grandmother was a daughter of the Grand Duke of Baden and a cousin of Napoleon III.; her aunt married first the Prince of monaco and then an Austrian noble, and among her other relations are the Duke of Newcastle, the Duke of Somerset, and the Duchess of Devonshire.

TO THOSE WHO DARE.

Here's to the man who says "I can,"
And holds his head uplifted,
And isn't afraid to take a dare
From the ones who are higher gifted;
Who never regrets and never forgets
The lesson he's learned thro' falling,
And uses them all for stepping-stones
To attain the crest of his calling.

Here's to the woman who says "I will,"
Regardless of what befalls her,
And doesn't despair at her load of care
Or the road thro' which fate calls her;
Who leans to the cross in her heavy loss,
And finds, what e'er her station,
That the sweet and pure are the things that make
Her the noblest of God's creation.

MISS GILLMAN, AUTHORESS

BY. A. M.DAVIES.

IT was very hot and stuffy in the little office. From the room beyond came the monotonous click-click of a typewriter, broken only by the regular jangle of the bell and the shove of the carriage back into position. The editor sighed wearily. Of what early use were the readers if they passed on such stuff as this to him for decision? He stared angrily at the heap of manuscripts on his desk. He was only a very young editor, the junior in fact.

The editor sighed again, then applied himself resolutely to his task. But how tired he was of reading the effusive output of those who conceived themselves as geniuses. And today he had another ground for ill-humor. All the week he had been looking forward to a quiet, restful Sunday at his sister's. And now the morning's mail had brought news which spoiled all that.

"I am so glad you are coming," Anna's letter ran. "Especially as I expect Edna Lawrence. She writes, too, and I am sure you will like her."

The editor frowned again at the thought. He had at once sent Anna a wire pleading detainment on important business. It was very tiresome of her, when she knew his tastes. He liked women well enough; they were nice and soothing and sat with pretty folded hands. But girls! He shivered at the very idea. They were always rushing about, giggling, chattering—it waseasy to see that the editor was young.

There was a timid knock on the outside door. The click of the typewriter stopped. A moment later the stenographer appeared.

"A young lady wishes to see you, sir," she said. Warrington groaned. But he felt himself resigned to the worst to-day.

"Very well, show her in," he said grimly.

There was a moment's pause; a hesitating step. And then the editor fairly jumped. She was so unlike what he had expected. Shy brown eyes looked at him under long dark lashes with a half wistful, half frightened gaze, a sweet red mouth quivered expectantly. She looked so altogether like a little girl about to cry that the editor felt impelled to comfort her.

"Come in," he said gently. And then he smiled. "Do I look so terrible?" he queried, rather amused, as the girl still stood uncertainly.

"No—no," she said reluctantly. "You don't. But then, I never spoke to an editor before."

Warrington's smile broke into a laugh.

"I am quite a tame one," he assured her. The girl, came in, carefully closing the door behind her. Then she pulled out a letter.

"It—it was that which gave me courage to come," she said. "I—I thought perhaps you might have made a mistake. Because the story isn't really very long," she added eagerly.

Warrington took the letter. It was typewritten, on the office paper, and set forth in polite terms that the editors liked the inclosed story; that it was bright, racy and original, but that it was rather too long for their use. It closed by requesting the author to send something shorter. Warrington looked up.

"Yes, I remember now," he said slowly. "We liked the story, Miss Gillman," gathering the name from the letter. "But it is a little long—couldn't you—couldn't you cut it perhaps?" Warrington hardly recognized himself as he proffered this last suggestion. But somehow he felt absurdly anxious to help this appealing little mite. The girl considered a moment.

"Perhaps I could. I do so want to see it published. Don't you love to see your name in print?" For the editor was also an author and was regarded as one of the cleverest of the coming young men. Only his love scenes were a bit weak and people thought that he would get over that. He laughed.

"Yes, I do," he confessed. "One doesn't get tired of it. At least I don't. But about yourself."

"Perhaps I might try another one," said the girl slowly. "I—I have the idea. About a girl who admired a man's work and wanted to meet him. And so she goes to his office on some excuse and finds him there——" She stopped.

"Yes," said Warrington. "And does she like him?"

The girl threw him a queer little look.

"She likes him very much," she assented. "But then she doesn't know how she is to see him again."

"Can't the man manage that?" interpolated Warrington. The girl flushed.

"Oh, he doesn't think anything about it," she explained hastily. "You see, he doesn't care about girls—and so——"

Warrington looked puzzled. Somehow the plot sounded oddly familiar. But he was not one bit concelted.

"How do you work it out, then?" he asked.

"Oh," said the girl breathlessly, "I believe they meet at the house of some friend, and there's a lake and moonlight——"

"I see," said Warrington absently. The story itself he did not think much of; but it had suggested an idea. How was he, Warrington, going to see this girl again? He was aware of a great and growing desire that he should do so. She had risen to her feet.

"Good-bye," she said. "Thank you for your kind advice. And I will try the new story." Warrington made a desperate effort.

"And in the meantime" he said. She started.

"You mean——" she asked.

"Am I not going to see you again?" He put it plainly. She flushed deeper than before.

"Oh—do you—do you really want to?" she asked eagerly. "Do you?"

"I do," he said determinedly.

She drew a long breath, then threw back her head.

"I am going to be at your sister's for Sunday," she said distinctly. "If you choose to come."

"Choose!" he echoed. "I will come, of course. But—" staring in sudden bewilderment. "Who are you I never have heard her mention——" But the girl interrupted.

"I am Edna Lawrence," she said, speaking very fast. "And—and you will probably despise me, but I am going to tell you the truth. Anna inadvertently let fall this morning that my account you were foregoing your holiday. And of course I felt sorry. And—and I told her that I would make you come. And she wagered me that I couldn't. So—so, of course, after that I had to. But you needn't," she urged. "I—I will never tell her that you said you would." The tears were perilously near the brown eyes now. But Warrington, who had got himself well under command again, came closer to her.

"I see," he said. "And the story?" The girl swallowed a little.

"Oh, I wrote it," she said. "Hope Gillman is the name I took. I—I'll try to rewrite it."

"I mean the other," said Warrington gently. "The one about the girl who came to the man's office. Did did she really like him" he demanded, his own voice changing sharply. It wasn't quite right as you had it. Perhaps the man had never cared for girl before, but this one he did care for, and he did try to see her again. Did he succeed Was there a lake and moonlight Tell me," his tone dropping to an eager entreaty. "May I come to Anna's to-night"

But the girl, who had fled to the door, caught at the handle. Then she stopped and looked back.

"There—there certainly is a lake," she admitted faintly, "and perhaps there may be a moon—to-night."

And the next moment she was gone.

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ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS.

Three or four years ago the late Dean Hole and Mrs. Hole landed at Dover, much exhausted, after a rough Channel crossing. While waiting for the train, the Dean pored over the railway regulations.

"Ah," he said, addressing the station inspector, "It's one consolation after such a crossing and this tiresome wait that we go back at half-price."

"I don't understand, sir," was the official's reply: "there is no special reduction."

"Oh, yes there is," said the Dean. "I've just been reading all your notices, and you state that you take returned empties at a much reduced