

THE PRIZE STORY.

NO. 27.

As lady or gentlemen's Fine Solid Gold Watch is offered every week as a prize for the best story, original or selected, sent to us by competitors under the following conditions:—1st. The story need not be the work of the sender, but may be selected from any newspaper, magazine, book or pamphlet wherever found, and may be either written or printed matter, as long as it is legible. 2nd. The sender must be a subscriber for *Truth* for at least four months, and must, therefore, send one dollar along with the story, together with the name and address clearly given. Present subscribers will have their term extended for the dollar sent. If two persons happen to send in the same story the first one received at *Truth* office will have the preference. The publisher reserves the right to publish at any time any story, original or selected, which may fall to obtain a prize. The sum of three dollars (\$3) will be paid for such story when used. Address—Editor's Prize Box, "Truth" Office, Toronto, Canada.

The following attractive and well written story has been chosen as our prize story for the present week. The sender can obtain the Watch offered as the prize, by forwarding twenty-five cents for postage and registration.

"PANSY."

A TORONTO ROMANCE.

WRITTEN BY NORAH LAUGHER, TORONTO.

One morning in March, I, Harry Burnstone, a briefless lawyer, just unsuccessfully passed my examinations, was seated on my high stool in the office of the well known firm of solicitors, Messrs. Collier, Collier & Bishop, Toronto Street, with whom I was engaged for the present, until I could hear of something more to my advantage.

Most of us at times are subject to that tiresome complaint, the "blues," and in that state was I that particular morning; blue, in fact regular dark, indigo blue, for I had just received a cablegram from England acquainting me with the illness of my father's cousin, the only living relation I possessed, a wealthy tea merchant in London. This message advised me to start at once to see him; but I was strongly opposed to going, for the old man, although my dead father's cousin, had held himself aloof from all correspondence with his Canadian kin, who had now all passed away except myself, his namesake.

I was nibbling my pen, perhaps with the hope of catching an idea with my teeth, as I ruefully surveyed a heap of M.S.S. on the table awaiting me, when the door opened and the elder of the firm, an old gentleman of seventy winters, entered the office.

"Why, Burnstone," said he cheerfully, "your face does not usually wear such a perplexed look; anything wrong?"

"I am troubled about some news I have just received from England."

"Well, my boy," said he kindly, "perhaps I can help you; come into my office, and we will talk it over."

Leading the way into his adjoining office, Mr. Collier sat down in his capacious chair by the cheerful fire in the open grate, while I took the message from my pocket, and placed it in his hands. It ran as follows:—

"Come at once, your cousin, Henry Burnstone is ill. Doctors give no hope."

"It seems to me such a wild goose chase," I broke out impatiently, "for of course he will not be alive when I get there, in two weeks' time. Ah, you are shocked at me, sir, but I cannot pretend affection where I feel none. He is my father's cousin, but for years he has been his most bitter enemy. No, I do not think I can go."

"If he has been your father's enemy, no doubt on his death bed he is repenting of the wrong he did him. You must go, my boy, and at once, too. Let me see; an Allan Line steamer sails on Saturday from Halifax. This is Wednesday, you must start to-morrow without fail. I will write you a cheque, which one of the clerks shall get cashed at once."

"But, Mr. Collier, I cannot let—"

"But me no buts," said he; "if you had stopped for one moment to look around you, instead of leaping into the street that winter morning, to pick a helpless old man from under the horses' hoofs, I should have been *beef* food for the worms ere this. Nonsense, Burnstone, I am going to help you in this trivial matter. Did you not save my life, and since then have you not been as a son to me? Now I would prove my gratitude and admiration for you by giving you a father's love, and at no very lengthy period the firm shall be recognized as Collier, Bishop, and Burnstone."

"How can I ever repay you?" I said, grasping the kind hand extended to me.

"Tut, tut, lad; you have repaid me over and over again. Now that will do, don't thank me, but set the clerks going with the

work you had in hand, and go round the city for the few etc. you want, and take your passage, then before seven this evening come down again to the office, for I would like to see you once more before you start. To-morrow morning I go early to Hamilton."

Again wringing my kind benefactor's hand, I hurried into the outer office, to explain to the clerks my unavoidable absence for two months.

Without Mr. Collier's aid it would have been impossible for me to have taken the trip to England, as my examination expenses had been heavy, and law students, it is generally understood, have not too much of the needful.

How kind and good of the old man? How he magnified the slight act I did for him that December morning on Yonge street, when he accidentally slipped in crossing the road, and I ran to his assistance, happily in time to save him from anything more serious. My six foot height gave me a look of superior strength, and it cost me nothing to carry that thin, spare form to a passing car, and from that first firm grasp of the hand I knew I had found a faithful, true friend in Amos Collier. Since then I had been a great deal with him, in his office the last few months, and often at his bachelor residence on Carlton street—for my benefactor was a bachelor, though easily to be seen not one of the cross grained, surly kind. The other Collier of the firm was his nephew on his brother's side, and Bishop, who attended the branch office in Montreal, was the younger Collier's wife's brother, a genial, good-natured American.

Having but few business arrangements and purchases to make in the city, the day lagged heavily. I am far from superstitious, but yet I seemed to dread leaving Toronto, and my kind employer. That night, as I grasped his hand, and looked long and earnestly into his keen, gray eyes, and mild, benevolent face I had learnt to love so well, I felt it was the last time we should meet on this earth, and with this unusually gloomy foreboding I left the office on Toronto street, and walked rapidly along Adelaide street on to Jarvis.

Although the middle of March, the snow lay still upon the ground, and the wind was very high, every now and then blowing in great gusts. It was altogether an unpleasant night, but few people were abroad, here and there a young man or woman hurrying from work to their homes or lodgings. As I turned the corner of Adelaide street, I stopped to button my fur coat closer, for it was growing very cold, and found myself wondering what England was like, and if I should find it very different from Canada, when I heard a sweet, clear, young voice, unmistakably English:

"No, dear, I feel sure we are at the wrong end of the street. I fancy we must be a long way from the house. I am sure it would be in a better locality than this."

"Well, Pansy, it is most tiresome of you not to enquire. How terribly the streets are lighted in this city, it is quite impossible to tell any of the numbers here. This young man looks like a gentleman, I will ask him."

"O, pray do not, we shall find the house presently, it is much higher up," pleaded the younger lady. By their voices I surmised they were mother and daughter.

"Yes, and be frozen to death by your

stupidity, Pansy, in not willingly addressing a stranger."

"Pardon me, can I assist you?" I asked, raising my cap.

"Thank you so much, we are trying to find the number of a house, but whether it is 271 or 291 we cannot quite determine, and I am afraid it is trespassing too much upon the kindness of a stranger to ask you to help us," answered the young lady. "I have the address written here, but so illegible we cannot tell if it be a 7 or a 9."

"If the number is 200," I replied, "it is much higher up the street. I am going that way, and if you will allow me to accompany you, I will try to find it for you. The odd numbers are on the other side. We will cross the street here."

Thanking me fervently, the ladies walked briskly by my side, the elder, although heavily enveloped in furs, I could see was small and slight, with gray, almost white hair, and a not unpleasant smile; the younger, tall and lithe, wore a thick, dark veil, which completely hid her features.

I cannot account for it, but something seemed to draw me to these strangers. As we conversed, I informed them that I was summoned on the morrow to the death-bed of my only relation in England.

"In what part of England does your friend reside?" enquired the elder lady.

"Camberwell, the south part of London, I believe."

"South-east," she corrected. "I am intimately acquainted with."

I think we can determine by the light of this lamp the correct number."

As the younger lady drew the paper from her muff, a wild gust of wind blew the thick, brown veil from around her sealakin cap, revealing to me the most beautiful face I had ever beheld, surrounded by an aureole of silky, golden hair, fringed low over a white forehead, and underneath which shone the loveliest pair of dark blue eyes, shaded by brown lashes—eyes which held mine entranced by a sort of spell.

She blushed deeply under my earnest gaze, as, after capturing the truant veil, I took the paper from her small, gloved hand.

"I think the number is 272," I said, trying to decipher the badly made figures by the flickering gas light. "We must walk on to the next crossing. I fear you are very cold, we had better hasten," I said, as I observed her draw her sealacque closer round her slight figure. "Ah, here it is, I believe," I said. "I will strike a match and look at this number. I am afraid you are quite shocked at the way our streets are lighted. No; this is 269, the next house will be the right one. Allow me to ring the bell for you." I said, snatching the action to the word, as we stood on the steps of a large and handsome residence.

"I cannot tell how to thank you enough," said the elder lady, as I raised my cap to depart, yet longing to stay, that I might know more of that fair, lovely face.

"Good-bye, and *bon voyage*," murmured the rich, red lips, and I thought the drooping, pansy-like eyes seemed to say, "we shall meet again."

How I hated to tear myself away from Toronto; all night long the dark, velvety, blue eyes haunted my dreams. I longed on the morrow to go to the house on Jarvis street and bribe the servants to give me the address of the two ladies who called there on the previous evening; but alas! my car on the Grand Trunk Line was one of the first to depart, and with many sighs I left the city an unknown face had already made so dear to me.

For the first time during the whole twenty-seven years of my life I was in love, in love, too, with a woman whom, in all probability, I should never meet again, for no doubt those two ladies were merely strangers, visiting the city for a short time. Shakespeare says, "Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?" "After all the world is not so large but I could find this girl of my choice—yes, I will find her. She is the one woman in the world to me, and she shall be my wife." With this mental vow on my lips, after leaving Montreal that evening, I sank into a peaceful slumber in my comfortable "bunk" on the cars. It is in the cold glare of the morning, though, that one truly realizes the shady and proxy side of life. "If I find her will she marry me?" I afterwards queried, "a poor briefless lawyer, with nothing to recommend him in looks, but what his glass tells him, a dark, almost swarthy face, and a tall, well-proportioned form—perhaps ugly, but not altogether ungrainly. Oh, my little blue-

eyed Pansy, it would be the old story of Beauty and the Beast."

Space does not permit me to relate my nine days' voyage on the "Polynesian." Sufficient to say that it passed pleasantly and happily, with the usual amount of flirting and match-making on board. Nevertheless I still remained true to the unknown blue eyes which haunted my vision. I must pass on over my railway journey from Liverpool to London—that grand old "city of ships"—with its antique towers and steeples, its stately old buildings, which are happily left to enable us to unbury the hidden past, with its wilderness of mazy streets, through which I trod, delighted with its vastness, and with its age. I must pass over much I should like to relate, and an incident which befell me at Paddington Station, where I was taken up, and my valise searched for dynamite, having the appearance of an American, and withal a suspicious looking one, and of the courteous way in which I was treated the while, making it to me more amusing than unpleasant; of the underground railway, with its odour of many odours, and of my tussle with the cabman—who after the manner of his brethren—on setting me down at my cousin's residence, "Whitmore House," demanded the fabulous sum of ten shillings, instead of his correct fee, two shillings and sixpence, which I offered him, and which he afterwards found best to accept.

My father's cousin, Henry Burnstone, was a widower, with no child to smooth the pillow of his old age; neither kith nor kin near him to shed a tear over his dying bed; no one but a good-natured old housekeeper, who had lived some years with him, consequently who readily sympathized with his foibles and eccentricities.

"I am very glad indeed, Mr. Burnstone, that you are come, for my poor master, Dr. Everard says, cannot last the night. He has done nothing but talk and rave of you since he was taken ill three weeks ago. I will get you some tea, and then you shall go to his room." And the dear old lady, after a burst of tears, bustled about the room in her hospitable, energetic, English manner.

Although scarcely three miles from the heart of the great city—comparatively speaking—this old-fashioned house in Camberwell seemed quite in the country. My cousin's room, at the back of the house, overlooked a large, well-kept lawn, bright with beds of violets, primroses, daffodils, and other spring flowers, and the soft "coo" of a flock of pigeons flying too and fro. I could see all this in the wan light, as I neared the bed of the invalid, who held out his thin, attenuated hand to be pressed in mine. Motioning the old lady to leave the room, he looked at me long and earnestly, as he said, "I am glad you are come, Henry. Your father named you after me, in the old days when we were like brothers. Ah, my boy,"—and the tears coursed slowly down the white cheeks—"I did him, as you are aware, a great wrong, and will God helping me, atone for it now, by leaving you, his son, all I have in the world, and—here his eye lightened—"It is no little sum, Henry."

"But you must have someone else in the world, whom you would rather give it to. You know naught of me. I may be—"

"Hold, Henry, your dear father's face is mirrored in yours; you have the true, honorable, straightforward look of a Burnstone, and as a Burnstone, I do not doubt your honor. You are the only living being, except one—but quick, boy, pour me some medicine in that glass by your elbow, I am growing faint."

I hastened to pour some liquid from the phial at his side, and begged him not to exert himself by talking more at present; but it was of no use arguing with him.

"I must say what I have to say now, Harry, for the end is coming. Where was I? Yes, I remember! There is one other, whom I would like to have share with you the wealth I have earned by my own industry, and that one is—raise me up higher, Henry, I am growing faint again."

I raised the poor, feeble form in my strong arms, when he went on:—

"Long, long ago, when I was about your age, Harry, I loved, and was engaged to a lovely girl, a few years younger than myself, the eldest daughter of a merchant here in the city; but I afterwards became infatuated with another and jilted her cruelly. The woman I married was neither in birth or education, suitable for me; but she made me a good wife, and a few years ago, as you are aware, died, childless. The woman I

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