

Two Dreams.

IN TWO INSTALLMENTS.

For all reply I turn away from him, and
begin to retreat my steps down
the narrow lane.

"Miss Travers! Miss Elsie! I am in fault
now! You have repeatedly asked my
forgiveness for what you have done, and I
have withheld it. Oh, Miss Elsie, you can
never know how deeply I feel this; but I
forgive you. We will part friends, and
may Heaven bless you!"

Then he raises his hand to his lips, and
I can say no more.

Passively I allow myself to be led down
the lane, along the high road, and so on to
the vicarage gates.

"Good-bye, Miss Travers; and once
again, Heaven bless you!" Sir Hugh mur-
murs; then I am standing just within the
gates alone—while he passes away from
me with quickened pace.

How wretched I feel as I creep slowly
along to the hall-door!

My father is still absent, I find; so leav-
ing a message for him with the servant, I
betake myself to my chamber.

There I give vent to the torrent of
tears with which my aching heart is bur-
dened, and again and again I blame my-
self for the part I have played as regards
Sir Hugh Staunton.

Cousin Maude is here, and I am fast for-
getting all my late trouble while listening to
her witty and laughable version of the end of
the season in her dearly-beloved London.

Dinner over, she and I pass out and
stroll up and down the orchard.

Only we two, for dear father is away
busy with parochial work, and Roger—
well! Roger has not been such a constant
visitor since the arrival of the stylish Lady
Merton.

Of course I have confessed all to Cousin
Maude—and she? At first she laughs most
heartily at the raucal face which I, thinking
it well-befits the occasion, have put on;
then suddenly her mood changes, and she
speaks to me, long and seriously, of what a
foolish part I have played throughout.

First—and this is evidently most impor-
tant to her—in contracting an engagement
with a mere country practitioner.

Of course, a fashionable town physician
would be another matter.

Secondly, in allowing such a little affair
to interfere with my chance of securing
such an excellent parti as Sir Hugh Staun-
ton.

"Elsie, I fancy I am correct in suppos-
ing you have met Sir Hugh since that night
on the balcony, and that he has again—"
she is saying, when I glance up, and—
Roger stands before us!

Has he heard? I know not.

A little willful spirit hovers around me,
and I nod to him, then call back an excuse
to Cousin Maude, and leave them together.

"And you might have been Lady Staun-
ton's rings in my ears as I make my way
to my own chamber and there reflect on all
Cousin Maude has said in response to my
confession.

And—silly little me!—I blush, and a
feeling of something like triumph comes
over me.

Voices warn me of my neglected duties
as hostess, and so I descend.

Down stairs in our pretty, flower-scented
drawing room I find Cousin Maude at the
piano, playing bits from Chopin, while
standing a little aside is Roger, engaged in
turning over a portfolio of music, which I
brought with me from town.

"All my new songs are there, Roger," I
say, as I pass him by on my way to a low
table at the other end of the room, where-
on lies my fancy-work.

"Yes; I see my favorite is here. You
must please sing it for me presently, Elsie."

"Which is that?" I question.

Roger holds up to my view the song he
has selected.

I glance carelessly at it; but the hot
blood will suffuse my face as I read the
title, "Never to Part!"

Ah! how many times have I sung that
same song with Sir Hugh standing by and
leaving over, now and then, to turn the
leaves!

But Roger's eyes are on me, so I thrust

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aside all thoughts and recollections of that
other, and make reply.

"I admire your taste, Roger, and I will
do my best presently to render it as it
should be sung."

Cousin Maude's fair and jewelled fingers
still wander over the ivory keys, and
Roger still turns lost after least of my
music, stopping now and again to read the
words.

And then, I know not why, but my heart
beats quicker.

I feel impelled by a something within
me to watch my lover's face, as he thus
peruses the words of my new songs.

My hands fall idly to my lap; I lean for-
ward slightly, until my breath comes faster
and faster.

A smile irradiates Roger's face as he
reads the concluding words of the song he
holds in his hand; then it vanishes, as,
with a slight sigh, he places the piece
with the pile he has already examined.

A pause ensues, while Cousin Maude's
playing rises to a wail, then dies away in a
pretty, soft air.

Roger seems listening intently to the
latter, for his fingers are still, and his eyes
become fixed on the title page of the next
song.

Well-remembered, for have they not
been present in my dreams now for many
a day past? Alas for me! I am so young
and admiration is sweet.

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculates Roger, and
there is such gladness and relief in the ac-
cent of his voice, that I glance up hastily,
and add—

"And I cannot possibly imagine where
you found this, touching it daintily with
my gloved fingers."

"That is my secret, Elsie, and I do not
think it would be wise to impart it to you
since you evidently know nothing of the
matter. No! I will destroy it at once, and
then I shall feel easier and more satisfied."

Oh! Elsie, if you had confessed to its
ownership I do not know what would have
become of me. But now I feel a relief—a
return to a happiness to which I have been
a stranger for some time past. Yes, I will
destroy this photo, and throw the pieces
to the autumn winds."

So saying, my lover prepares to rend
the likeness in two, when I suddenly lay
my hands upon it, exclaiming—

"Stay, Roger! It may belong to Cousin
Maude."

"I don't care in the least who may be the
owner of it, provided it be not my own
little Elsie," replied Roger.

At the same time encircling me with his
arm, he lays his lips on mine, with all his
old fondness and tenderness of manner.

"And now, Elsie, for the demolition of
another's property!"

I am powerless to stay the act.

In a few seconds the ground around us
is strewn with little bits of cardboard.

I glance at one as it floats earthward,
with upturned face, and on it I note the
features of the man on whom I am learning
to allow my thoughts to dwell so constantly.

Dare I stoop and pick it up?

I am two or three paces in the rear, and
Roger will never see.

I am just in the act of stooping—the
small and jagged piece of cardboard is al-
most within my grasp, when my lover's
voice sounds in my ears.

"That is right, Elsie," he says, carelessly.
"Pick it up, and tear it in still smaller bits."

Who knows? Sir Hugh himself may pass
this way later on, and I would not that he
should puzzle his brains, to the extent he
ruthlessly destroyed such a flattering portrait
of himself!

The tears are not far off as, in my morti-
fication, and not daring to refuse, I tear
off first the well-shaped mouth, then the
nose, while, finally, the eyes part company;
for, in my anxiety to retain as long as pos-
sible the image of the man who has cast
his glamour over me, I take infinite pains
to render the pieces as minute as possible.

But the end comes.

The last tiny morsel flutters from my fin-
gers, floats earthward, and finally rests on
the sere and yellow frond of a bracken near
by.

Lost in astonishment, I rush quickly
to the window, from which a view
of the road—his homeward route—
can be obtained, and strain my
eyes eagerly in that direction.

In the uncertain light I can notice that
my lover's head is bent low as he walks
down the gravel path, and so out into the
road.

As the gate clashes behind him, Cousin
Maude brings her triumphant march to an
end, and then joins me at the window.

"What have you done, little Elsie, to
thus offend your good lover?" she asks,
in mocking tones.

"I don't think Roger is offended with
me," I return; then add, prompted to it by
the same willful little spirit, "and I do not
mind so very much if he is offended."

"You have just my spirit, little Elsie,"
Cousin Maude answers; "and I do not
wonder at you not taking it to heart, con-
sidering your late triumphs, and securing
such a prize as all the Belgravia girls are
dying to obtain. Now that our dear and
respected doctor has left us once again
alone, come and sit down here by me, and
tell me about your last meeting with Sir
Hugh."

"I can't, tonight, Cousin Maude; it is
too late. And, listen, there is the prayer
bell!"

"Oh, I am sorry! I do hope your dear
father will not dwell too long upon the
misery of Jeremiah. I can positively
sleep, though it is only ten o'clock," re-
plies Cousin Maude.

Then, arm in arm, we repair to my
father's study, where await us the rest of
the household.

That night, later on, I dream of Sir
Hugh Staunton, and his name is on my
lips when I awake to find the glorious July
sunshine flooding my chamber.

"Elsie, I think you met Sir Hugh Staun-
ton when you were in town?"

"Sir Hugh Staunton? Oh, yes; he came
once or twice to Cousin Maude's. I believe
I remember him slightly," the last word
leaving my lips, I suddenly spoke, though I
willed it otherwise; and my head will
drop, though I want to hold it erect as
ever.

It is October. Roger is on his way to
visit a patient, one of Colonel Ellerton's
gamekeepers, who has met with a rather
nasty gun accident.

"Only slightly, Elsie?"

"Why do you ask, Roger?" I question
rather laughingly.

"Shall I tell you why, Elsie? Yes, I
think the time has now come and I will
tell you what I know."

Elsie, did you ever see
this before today?" Roger hurriedly asks,
taking from his pocket a cabinet-sized
photograph and holding it before my as-
tonished gaze.

"Sir Hugh Staunton?" I exclaim, while
a burning flood of crimson suffuses my
face as my eyes rest on the well-remem-
bered features; and then quickly vanishes,
leaving me white and trembling.

And all the time I feel that my compan-
ion's gaze is anxiously fastened on me,
while still my eyes seem riveted to the like-
ness he holds before me.

"Yes; this is a photograph of Sir Hugh
Staunton, Elsie, but—"

"Where did you get it, Roger?" I inter-
rupt.

"Did you ever receive such a photo-
graph from Lady Merton or—? But I
can't believe that possible, and you must
forgive my asking it, Elsie, for I was about
to ask 'from Sir Hugh himself.'"

"Never, Roger!" I indignantly reply,
gazing still at the well-remembered fea-
tures.

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been present in my dreams now for many
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getting worse. A friend advised me
to try Burdock Blood Bitters, I did
so, taking in all four bottles. As a
result I sleep well, have a good
appetite, my face is free from pimples,
my skin clear and my health is in
every way perfect."

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Now for my patient in good earnest! I
have dawdled sadly, Elsie, and yet I
do not regret the time thus wasted. Roger
exclaims, laying my unresisting hand upon
his arm, and so we walk on till the keep-
er's cottage appears in sight.

"I will wait outside, Roger. I do not care
to sit indoors with old Granny Evans. She
is so deaf that it is quite a labor to ex-
change even a few sentences."

"Very well, Elsie; I shall not be long.
Which way do you intend taking, in case I
should not see you when I come out?"

I rise as I speak, and with a hurried
bow, am turning away, when a hand is laid
unceremoniously on my shoulder, while a
voice— and oh, how it thrills me!—sounds
in my ear.

"Going so soon, Miss Elsie, and with no
other farewell than a formal bow? I have
so longed, so hoped for another meeting!
And it has ended thus!"

"I did not mean to be stiff and formal,
Sir Hugh; but I must go, for—here is
Roger!"

"Good-bye, then, Miss Elsie. We shall
meet again."

He raises his hat courteously and turns
away, while I walk to meet my affianced.

A dark cloud rests on Roger's brow; but
his tone is cheery enough as he greets me.

"I have not kept you waiting long, Elsie!
And I hope I did not interrupt Sir Hugh
Staunton's conversation. Was he inquir-
ing for his photograph, or were you giving
him a detailed account of its demolition?"

"I have only spoken a very few words to
Sir Hugh, Roger—none but what anyone
might have been a listener to," I reply,
somewhat loftily.

"I do not doubt you, Elsie, dear; but,
thank Heaven, I was not far off!" he mut-
ters, rather to himself than to me.

Again the set lips and knitted brow. I
feel very much annoyed.

What possible harm can there be in my
thus conversing with one whom I have so
often met in Cousin Maude's house?

"Elsie, do you believe in dreams?"

The question comes from Roger; I am
spending the afternoon at his home.

Mrs. Elston, always more or less an in-
valid, has just left us and gone indoors to
her sofa by the low French window, from
which, as she laughingly tells us, she can
still view our dear forms.

"Elsie, do you believe in dreams?"

We are standing together on the small
smooth lawn facing the drawing room win-
dow, through which I catch a glimpse of
Mrs. Elston's white cap when Roger puts
this question.

"Do I believe in dreams? No; of course
I do not. At least, I hope I am not so
silly," I answer, rather scornfully, as I turn
and walk away towards a small arbor al-
most hidden from view by the glossy laurels
growing around it.

My lover follows me and seats himself at
my side.

"Elsie, dear, I have a reason for asking.
I used not to believe in dreams; but I have
had good cause lately to think with Byron
that 'they speak like sybils of the future.'"

"Roger, how strangely you talk! But I
remember now you spoke of a dream, that
seemed to haunt you, on the night of my
return home from Cousin Maude's. I asked
you then to relate it to me, but you would
not!" I exclaim, rather pettishly.

"I recollect it all, Elsie! I did not then
satisfy your curiosity, as I did not deem it
necessary; but now, perhaps, it is better
that you should know that, and also our se-
cret."

"Whose secret, Roger?"

"My mother's and mine, darling. Listen.
Lay your hand in mine, and hear me pati-
ently. You are not cold, dear?"