

The sunny head was dropped again, and Susie prayed, even as Rosie had begged her—prayed for guidance to the better way.

Three pairs of little pattering feet were resting—three rosy faces pressed the downy pillow, and Susie's evening task was done.

Gently she stole away.

"I will go to father myself to-night. I will plead with him until he must yield," Susie said, as, cautiously closing the door of the nursery, she entered her own room.

The evening was oppressive, and Susie's black dress became very uncomfortable.

Fitting about, guided by the moonbeams, she sought for something of lighter texture.

The mourning robe was laid aside, and a dress, white and fleecy, wrapped her slender form.

The clustering ringlets were smoothed back, and rolled in a heavy coil high on the back of her head.

"Now I will go down; father will be alone at this hour, and—"

She paused, raised her sweet eyes upward, and clasping her hands, she murmured—

"Mother in Heaven, plead for me!"

Noislessly she opened the door, and glanced into the room.

Her father sat with his back towards her, leaning on a table, over which were scattered books and papers.

In his hand he held the picture of her mother.

She drew back a little, still, however, standing within the door.

She dared not interrupt the sacred privacy of the hour.

The rustle of her garments, light as it was, must have caught his ear, for his bowed head was raised.

"Mary, my wife, my own!" he cried, starting forward with extended arms. "Thank God for granting me one glimpse of you again."

Susie, awed and trembling, raised her eyes to see, clothed as in life, the same sweet, gentle face, the rippling hair, caught back from the smooth, clear brow.

"Mother!" she breathed forth.

The room was lighted only by the moonbeams; but the vision was plainly seen.

Another eager glance, and Susie stole away to her own room, and sank almost fainting into her mother's chair.

A little while, and grown calmer, she opened her eyes, to see again, directly in front of her, the same vision.

She started forward, stretching out her arms, and calling softly "Mother."

Nearer, nearer she drew, until, face to face, she stood beside the large mirror, in front of which she had seated herself.

Unwittingly in one of her mother's dresses she had robed herself, and gathered her curls in the manner her mother was accustomed to.

"How very, very like her I am. Yes, now I know; father saw me in the mirror opposite which I stood. Well, I will not break his sweet delusion. I meant it not, Heaven knows. Oh, if mother could only come to him, in dreams, perhaps, to plead for me. I cannot desert him, I cannot; I dare not. I will give up neither, but, clinging to both loved ones, I will trust to Heaven, for a happy decision."

With this determination, she sank to sleep, sweet and undisturbed.

Early next morning, as usual, she was in the breakfast-room, ministering to the little ones clustering around her.

The father's frown had lost its accustomed sternness, as he stood regarding his eldest child. A gentle, sympathetic light was in his eyes as they rested on the sweet face grown older, much, in those days of anxious care.

How maternally she looked.

So patiently listening to, and answering every wish of the little ones.

At last they were all satisfied; and Susie seeing, as she thought, her father deeply interested in the morning paper, stole away to the trying-place.

"I cannot leave him, Frank. Indeed, I never can without his blessing rest on me. No, no," she cried, as she saw the disappointed and stern expression of her lover's face. "I have tried, in vain, to make my mind up to it. How can I give up either, loving you both so well?"

"You have trifled with me, Susie; you have broken your promise, too. You will, most likely, never see me after this morning, if I go from you. Are you determined?"

"Yes, dear, dear Frank, I am determined not to go unless father blesses and bids me go. I will trust my happiness to him and God, who ruleth all things," Susie answered, looking very sorrowful, notwithstanding her faith.

"Then, good bye."

She raised her face, pale and pleading to his.

"Kiss me good bye, Frank, and say, 'God bless me,'" she whispered.

He did as she pleaded, but there was an injured air in his manner.

As he parted from her, she sprang after him, crying—

"Forgive me, Frank, if I have wounded you. Know that to me it is worse. One little parting look of love, darling."

"Oh, Susie, how can you?" He pressed her again to his heart.

And, determined to make one more appeal, he said—

"Susie, darling! love! trust me for happiness. You will never repent it. Come!"

"No no. Go!"

He turned off quickly, angrily then; and Susie sank, sobbing on the grass.

"My daughter!"

She raised her eyes, heavy with tears.

Beside her, with a sad, but kind and gentle face, her father stood.

With him a puzzled, doubtful expression on his features, her lover.

"Oh, Frank, I am so—so glad to see you again!" she cried, with as much joy beaming in her eyes as though their parting had been for years.

"Yes; as it is so very long since you saw him last!" her father said, with a pleasant smile.

"I feared it would be for years, perhaps for ever," Susie said, in a low voice, anxiously regarding her father, and a longing to beg an immediate explanation of her lover's return.

"My daughter, what did you intend to do after sending off this young man?—be a dutiful child, and wed as I wish you?"

"Never, never, father! I intend to be dutiful only so far as not wedding against your wishes, that is all—to leave the future to God, only praying constantly that some blessed influence may be sent to change your mind and heart," Susie answered, raising her eyes to his, filled with earnest determination.

"Your prayers must have commenced already, my child. Some influence hath surely been sent—some blessed influence, I truly believe."

"Yes, my child, you will wed to please your father."

"Here, Frank, take her."

"I ought to scold you for trying to coax her from me. I heard it all this morning. But I forgive you for her sake, and bless you, too, boy, for the sake of the one in Heaven who loved you."

"There, there, daughter, don't choke me with your kisses."

"Take her off, Frank, and make her happy. She is a good child, and will make a true and loving wife. God bless you both, my children!"

And so ended Susie's intended elopement.

DON'T CHANGE YOUR NAME.

When I asked Lucy Bacon to be Mrs. Hogg, she turned up her pert little nose, and said she could not think of taking such an outlandish name.

"The name's well enough," said I, bristling up. "You forget, surely, that like our distinguished namesake, we spell it with a double g."

"Do you think spelling it with a double w would make it any nicer to be called Mrs. Crow?" she asked, saucily.

With a grunt of disgust I turned my back on the provoking minx, and went my way, determined to banish her for ever from my thoughts.

But she would not be banished.

Her image, confound it, was as obstinate as herself.

It would stick in my fancy, in spite of every effort to drive it out.

For some time I treated her with pouting dignity, met her pleasant greetings with stiff bows, and paid ostentatious court to her rival coquette, Pattie Dunn, whom I detested almost as much as she did.

But it was no use trying; I could not hold out.

Instead of resenting my conduct, Lucy kept her temper so admirably, and made herself so charming whenever we met, that I fairly gave in at last, and something like the old relations were restored between us.

I was a bit of a politician, and had worked like a beaver at the last election to secure a seat in Parliament for my friend Smith, and had succeeded.

Now was the time for him to requite my services, and he did it.

He got a bill through, changing my name to Percy Randall.

The cost in champagne and oysters was immense, but that was nothing to the jokes I was made the butt of.

One old ministerial reprobate, for instance, moved that a committee be appointed to report whether my rechristening should be by sprinkling or immersion.

I was overjoyed when the thing was over, and I had the right to present myself to Lucy as Mr. Percy Randall.

"What a real nice name!" she said.

"I'm glad you think so," I answered. "Permit me to make you the offer of it."

And I caught her hand in mine.

She drew it back gently.

"I—I'm sure I feel very—very much flattered, Mr. Hogg—Randall, I mean," she stammered; "but—but—"

"But what, dearest?"

"It can never be."

"Never!"

"Never."

After all the champagne, jokes and oysters I had stood, that was the answer I got.

"Traitor!" I exclaimed, "you love another."

There was a confession in her blush as plain as any words could have spoken.

In a paroxysm of rage and jealousy I tore myself from her presence.

In a month's time Lucy Bacon had become Mrs. Salathiel Shoate; and it gave me a malicious pleasure to think that her new name

after all, was little less swinish than the one I had first offered her.

I plucked up spirit at last, and removed to a remote part, resolved, under my new name, to commence my career anew.

None of my old friends were informed of my intended place of abode.

It was my purpose, for the present, to obliterate all traces of myself.

If mayhap, those who had once known me one day found me out, it should be when I had made the name of Percy Randall famous.

I went into politics, cultivated oratory, and was finally nominated.

It was on the eve of the election, and my chances of success were excellent.

I had gone to the railway station to meet a friend who had been canvassing part of the district, and who was to meet me and report progress.

"Hallo! Hogg!" exclaimed a voice as the train stopped, and the passenger swarmed out to make the best of the fifteen minutes allowed them for refreshments.

"Hogg, I say!" repeated the voice, as I turned my back to avoid recognition by anyone who knew me by that odious name.

A heavy slap on the shoulder left me no alternative but to confront the voice's owner, who proved to be an old college chum whom I had not seen since the day on which our venerable Alma Mater had turned us out, with her blessing, a couple of jolly Bachelors of Art.

"Hogg, I say!"

What an embarrassing position.

I could not return the salutation without admitting either that I was now passing under an assumed name, or that I was, for some reason, the possessor of an alias.

Most of those present knew me, and a circumstance so suspicious would be sure, at the present juncture, to be used to my disadvantage.

I had to decide quickly.

The best course I could think of was to give my old friend the cut direct and walk off as though I did not know him.

Next morning a handbill came out, addressed to "the independent voters of S—"

"Men of S—," it began, "do you wish to be represented in the House of Commons by a coward?"

Then followed a statement, backed by numerous affidavits, to the effect that I had suffered myself to be publicly insulted—in short, to be called a "hog" three several times without resenting it.

It was a regular fire-eating community.

The faintest suspicion that a man wasn't ready to fight to the death on the least provocation, at once lost him caste, character, and influence.

I had no plausible explanation to offer, and no time to offer it had I had one.

I was overwhelmingly defeated, and went to hide my disgrace where I had trusted none would ever invade my obscurity.

Not long after, an advertisement in a newspaper attracted my notice.

It requested the surviving relatives of Ezekiel Hogg to report themselves to a certain legal gentlemen, from whom they might learn something to their advantage.

I had a paternal uncle named Ezekiel, who had gone abroad many years ago, and of whom the family had never heard since.

I might be that he had died leaving a handsome fortune, and that I was the nearest heir.

At all events the thing was worth looking after.

The failure of my recent plans had placed me in such circumstances that a lucky windfall would prove most acceptable.

I took the journey necessary to reach the lawyer's place of residence.

I presented myself before him.

It was as I had conjectured.

Ezekiel Hogg was my uncle.

He was dead, and had left an enormous fortune.

I don't want to remember how much.

I explained my relationship to the deceased.

"If you establish what you say," replied the lawyer, "you are his nearest heir."

"And, of course, entitled to his fortune," I remarked.

"May I ask a question?" inquired the lawyer.

"Certainly," I answered.

"What is your name?"

"Percy Randall, I said. "It was Hiram Hogg, but I had it changed by an Act of the Legislature."

The old lawyer shook his head.

"Most unfortunate," he added.

"How so?" I asked. "Surely the name can make no difference?"

"It makes a vast difference in this case," he returned.

"Your uncle had some peculiar notions, it seems. He not only wished his fortune to remain in his family, but in his name."

"His will provides that it shall go to his nearest surviving relative bearing the name of Hogg."

It needed no elaborate opinion to enable me to see the point.

The fortune that would have been mine went to some trumpery third or fourth cousin, and all through my stupid folly in changing my name to gratify a whim of faithless Lucy Bacon, whom I lost to boot.

AROUND THE WINTER FIRE.

AN OLD MAN'S REVERIE.

We gather round the winter fire,
Without the fierce winds blow,
And through the shutters most coldly mutters
A song of the falling snow.

We read the books we loved to read
When we were girls and boys,
And young eyes glisten while young hearts listen
To tales that are bright with joys.

We sing the songs we used to sing
In the days of auld lang syne,
And the swelling chorus a spell throws o'er us
That seems almost divine.

We look upon the pictures old
That hang against the wall,
And many a pleasure with perfect measure
Their faces do recall.

My hair is growing white with age,
But my heart is warm with mirth,
While we fondly gather in this wintry weather
Round our own domestic hearth.

To sing the same old songs again,
The same old books to read,
And show that duty and moral beauty
Make home a joy indeed.

The books, the songs, the pictures bright
Were precious things to me
In seasons olden when life was golden
And precious e'er shall be.

THE LOST NOTE.

The Rev. Mr. Holbrook put the note there exactly in the middle of the table.

He remembered it distinctly and he never was mistaken.

But the note was there no longer.

What did it mean?

There stood the little vase of flowers, the shadow of the rose-bud falling upon the cloth as he had seen it when he laid the note down.

There were the books and the little card basket.

There, perched up in the great Turkish chair, sat his little daughter making a bed and pillows for her new wax doll.

He had only gone to the front door with the parishioner who had brought her contribution for the approaching fancy fair, in the shape of this very note, and now it was gone.

There was no breeze to stir it, for the windows were shut.

It was certain that Lilly sat where she had been seated when he left the room.

Perplexed and angry, the father questioned her.

"Lilly, where is the money that I laid here?"

Lilly shook her head, and her father inquired—

"Has Lilly got any money?"

Lilly nodded.

"Show it to papa."

Lilly laid down her work—oh, such a crooked little bag, with stitches an inch long on the edges; and letting herself down from the chair, came slowly across the room, and stood solemnly before her father.

"It's in my pocket," she said; and put a tiny hand into each and drew out two pence.

"Is that all?" asked the clergyman.

"Eth," said Lilly.

"You did not see any on the table?"

"No," said Lilly, and went back to her work again.

The clergyman paced the room, looked into the corners, and surveyed the length of the carpet.

Then he spoke again.

"Lilly, who has been into the room since I left it?"

Lilly pondered.

After a while she said—

"Ned did."

"What did he do?"

"He took a flower out of the vase, and put it in his coat," she said, without any hesitation.

"The vase on the table?" asked the clergyman.

"Eth," said Lilly. "Then he went right away to kool."

This was added, because the little creature saw anger in her father's eye, and knew that a great dislike for school, on her brother's part, was a frequent cause of displeasure and reprimand.

"I know," added the little girl, solemnly, "that he runned all the way."

"Aha!" said the clergyman—and then he walked to the window, and hid his face in his hands.

He had a cold heart, but it was aching pitifully just then.

He was tender to no one, but he longed to be proud of his son, and a suspicion that was terrible to harbour, possessed him.

Ned was a wild boy, an idler.

He hated study.