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The Power of Tears.

BY A BACHELOR.

"Tears, tears, women's tears! Pshaw! they'd never move me to pity. Why, a woman can weep tears enough to well, blot out the numerous transgressions of this elect trio and never feel a heart-pang. Woman's tears! Why, they are like the droppings from a rock—a mere natural dampness that appears upon the surface, because the woman-material is too hard to absorb it."

This piece of profound skepticism was uttered by Tom I., of the daily press, who with Bob G., of a rival newspaper, had dropped into my room after we had "sat out" Fanny Davenport's "Leah."

"Well," said Bob, "that is a refreshing piece of affectation upon the part of a man, who within an hour was ready to blubber over the mimic woo of a handsome woman, who scarcely concealed, under her skillful acting, all the attributes and condition of female happiness."

"That's just it," replied Tom; "acting has its place where it is most attractive and effective—and that is on the stage. We go to the theatre for the purpose of witnessing it, and resign our feelings to its influence, knowing that it is avowed and honest mimicry. But for the abominable acting which with so many women never ceases, and which is imposed upon us as genuine feeling, I have no susceptibility, and it moves in me no other feeling than contempt."

"Whatever may have been the experience that produced the bitter cynicism," said Bob, "I do not envy the hardened condition of the man who boasts that he can remain unmoved by a woman's tears."

"That is because you regard them as her sign of distress instead of her weapon, as symbols of weakness instead of strength," retorted Tom. "She regards tears as her birthright, and ages of practice have enabled her to use tears as a weapon, with a skill that makes slaves of those to whom she is wont to pathetically allude as tyrants."

"Hold up, my philosophic friend," I now interrupted. "Must join Bob in challenging your glib statements and contemptuous disposal of a subject about which all men have deep and earnest feelings. It is a delicate thing to draw the veil from our life's romance, even after the last dream of love is over; but to silence Tom and convince him of the power of tears, I will tell you a story of how they once entered and influenced my life:

"It was the second year of the war, and I was home nursing a slight wound that I had received—not gloriously in battle, but most ingloriously from the hind foot of a mule with whom I had had a dispute as to the proper direction in which an army wagon was to move. It induced an inoperable aversion to mules and everything else pertaining to the army, and although I thirsted for military glory and would doubtless have distinguished myself in battle, I resigned—What in thunder are you laughing at, Tom? At that time I had a friend, Frank G.— You've heard me speak of him—a right good fellow, but a little susceptible.

"Well, on a cold winter's day, as I was rapidly convalescing, Frank rushed suddenly in the room, uttered his 'well Jack,' heaved a sigh that prepared me to listen to an account of some new goddess who had enraptured him. I was not wrong. He launched forth into a rapturous speech, expressive of the beauty and worth of Eleanor Edson, whom he had met the evening before, and before whose shrine he was already bowing in silent worship.

"O Jack!" he cried, "she is beautiful! So queenly and majestic, with such dark, rich waves of hair, such a noble brow and scornful mouth, with its curling upper lip; but her eyes, O Jack! He sank into a chair unable to go on. "I could not refrain from reminding him of certain other damsels, both dark and fair, azure-eyed and night-eyed, sunny, raven and chestnut-haired, whose praise he had as enthusiastically spoken by-gone days.

"Mum's the word!" he cried, impatiently, of which heart may have many, but it can have but one love. I admit, Jack, that woman has been the fever-dream of my life, the idol before whose shrine I have ever bowed; but feelings have been awakened in my nature, in this case, that I have never known before. I have discovered, at last, that real love is not the idle dream cherished only while the romance of passion and imagination lingers around it. It is of noble birth and eternal life. Let it come when it may—when the purity of our virgin-truth is, as yet, unscathed, or when the heart turns, weary of its own fecklessness, from many a shrine it has worshipped, to seek some purer fountain at which to quench the unsatisfied soul-thirst; there can be but one real love to a life. You must see Eleanor."

"What ever pleasure I may have felt at this suggestion was immediately dispelled, as his next words revealed his intention that this seeing was to be vicarious. 'I am going to call on her to-night and will drop in and tell you about it in the morning,' he added, upon leaving me. "I lost all interest in the matter the moment after his departure. In fact, I did not place much faith in Frank's description of his lady-loves. I recalled his impassioned dissertations upon the loveliness of a young widow—a perfect Hebe—whom he had met at Cape May, and how I had journeyed, on a hot summer's day, to that sea-coast nook to see the gem of womanhood. "I was introduced to the gem in her bathing-suit, as she emerged from her bath, and fairly recoiled from two hundred pounds of dumptiness, sunny as to hair and moony as to face. Frank's love went out with the tide that day and never returned; at least I never heard him mention her again.

"As my health improved and I got about among mutual friends, I learned that there was something to account for Frank's present passion. All the men in our set were talking of the belle and heiress, Eleanor Edson, and all agreed that she was very beautiful, very fascinating but very proud and cold-hearted. "Why said one dashing fellow, who was a sort of oracle among us, 'that girl was born to illustrate Tennyson's *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*. Love is impossible to her, and I pity the man who fails to make that discovery in time to save his faith in woman's love and truth."

As the oracle's discovery was supposed to have been coincident with a certain day, when, very pale and very excited, he came away from an interview with the fair Eleanor, which had been very vehement and affirmative on his part, and very calm and negative on hers, we promptly offered him our condolence on his evident loss of faith in these two trifles. "I had heard enough to make me long for a sight of this cold and haughty beauty. Forewarned and forearmed, I resolved to place myself in her way, in the hope that she might be induced to select me for a victim—don't laugh, Tom, that hope was born of her vanity, not mine—when I would prove to her that beauty, without qualities of true womanhood, would not move all men to adoration.

"One morning, soon after, Frank came early to my room and gave me a glowing account of his last call. He declared he had discovered, for the first time, what love really was, in proof of which he described the usual symptoms of loss of appetite, inability to sleep, distaste of business, etc., etc. "O! Jack, you were never in love and cannot sympathize with me now nor know the agony of hope and fear in my heart. She is beautiful!" and he bowed his head on his hands and sighed. I should have thought him really in love and sympathized with him as a victim of Eleanor Edson's wiles, had I not seen him survive precisely the same situation several times before. As it was, I suppressed a yawn, and said:

"Well, Frank, my boy, when am I to see this wonderful damsel?" "This very night," he replied, eagerly. "I have brought you a card for Mrs. Bell's reception. She is to be there and I want you to meet her—my peerless Eleanor!"

"That evening found me in a state of expectancy at Mrs. Bell's where I was almost immediately presented to Miss Edson. Now, Tom, don't ask me to describe her, I can't do it. She was, indeed, beautiful—beautiful beyond my previous sense of the word—and I had looked at her and listened to her scarcely ten minutes, when I was ready to fall at her feet with her other worshippers. Her eyes were her chief charm—large, lustrous, dark; beautiful orbs flashing at times with such dazzling light, they almost blinded the gazer. It was a spell, an enchantment, if you please, but I paused not to think what it was, for it seemed sufficient happiness to look into those two glowing

will, where beauty and love had enthroned themselves, and before whose mingling spirit I felt my resolution giving way. But I had a duty to perform, and withdrawing from the power of her charms, sought to fortify myself by recalling her heartlessness.

"Days passed on. Frank had offered his heart and hand to the beauty, been rejected, procured a bottle of laudanum, which still remained untouched in his room, and roamed about disconsolately, but I was still sane. Because of this feeling of safety, I sought her more frequently, convinced that the brightest glances from her eyes fell harmlessly on my stony heart. Just then I made a discovery. Eleanor Edson loved me. I had found her heart. I knew it; never mind how, but be assured I was not assured without abundant proof. When I entered a room where she was, her eyes would seek mine and brighten as they met. When she talked with me, it was in a gentle tone, and I have heard her voice tremble when she sang for me, and seen her cheek flush and sicken lashes droop when I gazed upon her face.

"One evening—a glorious, moonlight evening—I was walking with her down by the sea. We were talking of a soldier's life, and I had been telling her stories of the camp and field and gallant deeds done in battle, and her eyes kindled as I talked, and she cried: "How I should love to be a soldier's wife to follow him to battle, and to watch, if even from afar, as he plunges into the thickness of the fight and boldly strives for the victory; and if he fell, I could not weep if he fell fighting face to the foe, but would thank God that I had been his wife and seen him die a glorious death!"

"While there was rather more of heroism and a willingness to sacrifice a husband to glory than I thought I would like in a case of my own, I could not withhold my admiration, as I said:

"Oh, you could never endure the hardships of a soldier's wife. Could you travel through snow and ice, or over the hot sands of weary deserts? I eagerly asked, vaguely mixing up countries in the attempt to speak effectively.

"Yes, yes," she cried, "I could do all this and more for one and with one I love!"

"I looked down into her eyes, flashing with enthusiasm, and said, in a low, earnest tone:

"With one you love? Will you ever love, Eleanor? Does any mortal live who can obtain that priceless gem, your love?"

"She dropped her lashes over her eyes—those beautiful eyes—for a moment; then looking up, said:

"Can you doubt my power of loving? Yes!—Jack—I can love!" and as I caught one glance from her eyes, from which a soft light was streaming like glory, my resolution faltered. But I must be certain—must feel that her heart was enslaved as mine was, so, laughing a real stage mocking laugh, I said:

"Why, what a scene we are having! Private theatrical! Shall we continue the performance before our friends?"

"I was not unprepared for a lightning flash of indignation from her eyes, and would not have been surprised had she uttered bitter, scornful words that would have silenced me forever. But what did you think she did, Tom? She looked me full in the face, and in the moonlight I saw tears gather in her eyes. Slowly they gathered there, and she did not wipe them away but let them fall one by one, every tear bringing to me a deep conviction that I was beloved as I loved. She looked sadly, reproachfully at me and I—well, I fell at her feet, implored her forgiveness, told her I loved her—had loved her from the first, and in a minute more I was kissing those very tears away, and calling her my own, my ownest own, for she had promised to be my wife.

"So you see, Tom, women can weep real tears and melt a man's heart with them, too."

"But I never knew before that you had been married," said Tom, in an apologetic tone, but with a queer light in his eyes.

"Well, I—in fact—that is I never was. You see, she—that is Eleanor—well—she jilted me in a week, but I had supposed a man telling a story might end it where he pleased.

in connection with a fellow like Laurens." And Leslie Waldo looked down with a half-exposed expression into the pretty but saucy face of his betrothed.

"Indeed, Leslie," she answered, pettishly, "I do not know why you object to my receiving attention from Mr. Laurens. He is a gentleman, and is always kind and obliging. And as to my being more choice in regard to my friends, I flatter myself I usually keep good company. You are rather inclined to be tyrannical," she added, looking up sideways into his face.

"Now, Minnie, you know me better than that. I could not act the tyrant with you if I tried. Promise me what I asked you," he urged.

"I cannot, Leslie. Don't be so foolish! Even if I wished it I am not at liberty to do so, as I have already made three positive engagements with Mr. Laurens for this week. To-night a party of four ladies and an equal number of gentlemen intend going up the river in a yacht. To-morrow night the same party is going to Mrs. Barton's masquerade ball. Then—"

"Stop, Minnie!" he interrupted, shortly. "Do you mean to tell me you intend to make one in these parties with Laurens for your escort?"

"Most certainly I do. Why not?" "For more reasons than one. In the first place I object to your going on the river except with your father or me. Next, I have a particular aversion to masquerade parties, and will not sanction your appearing at Mrs. Barton's in company with Laurens."

"Will not sanction! An agreeable expression to make use of to a lady! Surely you are beginning early to command! But let me tell you I am not so willing to obey, and I intend to accept the attentions of Mr. Laurens or any other gentleman I choose! You are selfish! You will not pay me attention yourself, yet deprive me of the privilege of another's company."

"Very well, Minnie, since you view matters in that light, the only thing left for me to do is to bid you good-bye forever."

"Forever!" she repeated in startled tone.

"Yes, forever, unless you promise what I ask. Now, Minnie, if you love me you will not let that man come between us. You cannot have his company and my attentions at the same time; you must choose between us. Which shall it be?" he asked, feeling confident her choice would be in his favor.

He did not know that when a wayward woman's pride is hurt she will do many foolish things, utterly regardless of consequences. Minnie paused for a moment, then, slipping the engagement ring from her finger, she handed it to him, saying:

"You are free; now go."

"Be it as you wish," he said, coolly placing the ring in his pocket. "I hope you will not have cause to regret your choice." And with a bow he turned and left her.

No sooner had he departed than Minnie threw herself on a sofa and cried as if her heart would break. She truly loved Waldo, but she was a spoiled darling, the only child of wealthy parents, who were devoted to their hearts' treasure. This was her first quarrel with her lover, to whom she had been betrothed a year. He was ten years her senior, and she was not yet eighteen. They had met at the seaside, where they were spending the summer months, when she was but fifteen, and, notwithstanding the difference in their ages, had been mutually pleased with each other.

Minnie's parents were satisfied with their future son-in-law. He was a physician in good practice in the town of H—, some fifty miles from Minnie's home, and was also in possession of a moderate fortune. Owing to the distance between them, he could not, of course, be as attentive to her as he would have wished; but he being of a manly, generous disposition, was very reasonable and wished his promised wife to enjoy herself in a reasonable way, but in this instance, as we have seen, she had taxed his good-nature too far; he did not dream of her acting merely out of pique, and was too little versed in the ways of woman, and too matter-of-fact himself, to think of any such thing. He therefore took it for granted that she had become tired of him, and although his heart was heavy, and life appeared very dreary, he accepted his fate without a murmur, and hoped in his heart of hearts that his lost darling would be as happy as he would have tried to make her.

After an hour's cry, Minnie felt somewhat better, and aroused herself, thinking, "How foolish of us to quarrel over that little fellow for whom I do not care a snap of my finger! But then I won't be ordered. I'll show him I have some spirit, and perhaps he will appreciate me better. I don't

think he cares very much about me, or he would not have talked to me in such a manner. I wish he would come back now, though; I almost believe I would give up going to those parties. I am sorry I promised Henry Laurens; but then, how did I know Leslie would be here? I did not expect him for two whole weeks. He might have written to me beforehand, and then I should have been prepared. Oh, well, I can't help it now; I will fulfill my three engagements, and if he does not come back before that time, he surely will before he returns to H—. So I won't worry, but be as happy as I can under the circumstances."

But the next three days went by, and the next ten, without bringing Leslie Minnie was wretched, but strove to appear indifferent, and, becoming desperate, accepted all the attentions offered her from her numerous gentlemen acquaintances, Laurens excepted. She had kept her engagements with him, but absolutely refused to make others. She could not have told why, but since her quarrel with Waldo she had been filled with dislike and mistrust of her would be wooer; and he was at present paying court in a more favorable quarter.

Matters continued in this way for some time, and Minnie, who had not received even a word from Leslie, and had truly repented of her conduct toward him, was growing very restless, and really looked so ill as to cause her parents much uneasiness. They were anxious to learn the cause of her indisposition, and surmised that something was amiss between her and Leslie, but, as she had not made a confident of any one, they could only grieve and wonder what happened to hide the sunshine from their darling. She had usually been so accustomed to confide in her mother that lady forbore to question her now.

"No," she replied to her husband, when he requested her to question Minnie, "whatever it is, she has enough to bear at present; I will give her all the comfort I can, and I have no doubt but her confidence will come in time. All I can ascertain is that she and Leslie have had some misunderstanding, although she insists he is not to blame, like a good, generous darling that she is." And the fond mother looked as if she would have liked to devour Leslie on the spot.

About a month after her last meeting with Leslie, Minnie was sitting at the breakfast table with her parents, when the morning mail came in. As she handed it across the table to her father, her quick eye caught sight of the familiar hand writing of Leslie. With a half sob she snatched eagerly for the letter for which she had so longed, but, alas! she was doomed to disappointment, for it was directed to her father. Poor Minnie could contain herself no longer, and dropping her head on her hands' sobbed aloud. After some minutes, her mother had succeeded in calming her sufficiently to hear the contents of the letter in question.

"Dear Mr. Astor," it ran, "hoping I may not be too late with my information, I wish you to know something of the character of John Brown alias Henry Laurens, to whom your daughter is engaged. I have just ascertained from good authority, that he is already married, and has a wife and child living. His wife, an estimable lady, supports herself and child, and despises the man who deserted her from her home and then deserted her because she would not support him in idleness. He is an adventurer, and although he may be in love with your daughter he is probably very much in love with her money also. Should you wish for proofs of his guilty I can give them, although I do not think anything further than I have told you will be necessary to convince you. I trust the above information will be taken in the spirit in which it is intended."

After reading the letter Mr. Astor handed it to his daughter, asking for an explanation. She took it nervously, and, after taking in the contents at a glance, exclaimed:

"The villain! Who dares to say I am or ever was engaged to him? No, indeed—though to my shame be it said, at first I was very much fascinated by his handsome face and pleasing manners. He has told Leslie that lie to clear the field for himself, and that accounts for Leslie's not writing before. I thought it strange that he never tried to see me before he left town."

Without another word she turned to leave the room, when she heard some one exclaim:

"Oh, Mr. Astor! Do come with me as quickly as possible! There has been a terrible accident just outside of the depot—several people injured, and it is feared that some are killed. Your friend Waldo is said to have been on the train, and has not been heard of yet."

Minnie gave one scream as she heard the last sentence, and fell in a dead faint at her mother's feet. By this time her father and his friend had departed to render what aid they could to the sufferers. Arriving at the scene the first object that met their gaze was the tall form of Leslie Waldo; he had been doing his best to help the suffering creatures around him, though looking pale and worn and as if he needed care himself. Mr. Astor grasped his hand warmly, exclaiming:

"Thank God, Leslie, that I find you safe! I had hardly dared to hope. Now I think you have done your share here, and there is some one at the house who needs you; go to her at once. Not a word! I must be obeyed. She will explain."

Without further conversation Leslie allowed himself to be led out of the crowd like one in a dream. He was completely tired out with the exertions of the past few hours. When he at last reached the house of Minnie's father the door stood ajar, and, following his impulse, he entered the library—the room in which he had last seen his darling. He started back as he beheld her; she lay on the sofa, looking so white and slim that he could hardly believe her to be Minnie of old. As he stood there, scarcely daring to breathe, she opened her eyes, and, seeing him bending over her, cried:

"Leslie! Leslie! Is it really you? or am I dreaming?"

"I am here, alive and well, thank Heaven!"

We will now retire and leave the reunited lovers to themselves, as the conversation will probably be better appreciated by two than by a larger number. At dinner the faces of the whole party wore a happy and cheerful aspect.

A few days after Mr. Astor met Henry Laurens, and, accosting him as Mr. John Brown, greatly to the dismay of that individual, whispered a few words into his ear which reminded him of an immediate desire to explore foreign countries, where he is at present, no doubt, trying his vitality on those who are simple enough to be victimized.

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