

What Might have been Expected.

BY MARY A. WHITE.

From N. Y. Ledger:

"Berks has been up to Albany about some business for the store, Lucy, and he heard that Henry Newton had been arrested for forger and theft."

"But it is not true! Father, it is not true!"

The wailing cry of utter misery, called the mother in from the but-tery. Lucy was lying in her father's arms, shivering and moaning as if stricken with physical pain.

"It is true, Lucy. I always mis-trusted him, the smooth-tongued villain. Thank Heaven I was firm for once, and kept my darling."

"Father, where is he?"

"Where they put criminals—in jail!"

There was a pause of utter silence Mrs. Merriment coming across the room to stroke her daughters hair with a loving touch. Then Lucy rose stiffly from her father's arms, and staggered across the room to the staircase, stumbled up blindly to her own room. Her mother would have followed, but the old farmer held her back.

"Leave her alone a bit, mother," he said, hoarsely, wiping his eyes with the back of his broad hand. "She'll fight it out best by herself." "Who'd a' thought she'd take it so hard."

"We knew she loved him father!"

"But she's been so quiet since he left, I thought she was getting over it."

"We can't be too thankful that she did not marry him when he wanted her."

"No—but—poor child! poor child! to think of her young, pure heart being set on such a scoundrel, when there's good men would give their right hand to win her!"

"It's the world's way, father; but she'll get over it! We'll see her a happy wife yet, please Heaven!"

Then Mrs. Merriment bustled away again, and put the smoking supper on the table. After she had filled the farmers plate, she went up stairs, coming back with red eyes.

"She'll not eat yet, father!" she said.

And the food left the table almost untouched, for neither father nor mother could eat, thinking of the stricken heart mourning in the room above them. Before they slept they stole in, as if their child was sick, for a silent caress, hoping morning would bring comfort.

But when the sun rose and the farmer lifted his head from a sleep-less pillow, he saw his wife coming from the room beyond, white and shaking.

"She's gone, father," Mrs. Merriment whispered. "She's not slept in the bed all night, and she is not in the house." She left this!

As she spoke, the mother held out a note, at which she had looked with hungry eyes, knowing nothing of reading or writing.

But the farmer could read; and, in a choked, low voice, he read the letter:

"I cannot stay to disgrace you! I was married when Henry Newton went away in August, on the day I coaxed father to take me to town to buy a new hat. You will find the marriage on the books of the church opposite the tavern where father always puts up. I saw it written down, there. I have my lines with me, that the minister

gave me. I must go to my husband, and you must think of me as if I was dead, because I will never come back to disgrace the old home. I am a convict's wife, and no longer worthy to be your loving child. Lucy."

"Oh, father!"

"Married—all this time deceiving us—I thought if there was one true woman on earth, Jane, it was our Lucy, and she has been living a lie to us for weeks."

"But what will she do? Where can she go? Will she be allowed to go with him?"

"How do I know? I've been an honest man, Jane. What should I know of prisons and prison rules."

The old farmer's face was set in rigid lines as he spoke, for the treachery of the child who was the very idol of his heart cut him deeply. It had cost him bitter pain to refuse her her heart's desire, but he had justified the brilliant gentleman who wanted to marry her, knowing that he was the richest farmer in the county, and fearing that the sutor thought more of that fact than of Lucy. And he had trusted Lucy blindly, never supposing her capable of a deceitful act or thought.

Mrs. Merriment went down-stairs to get breakfast, knowing it was useless to argue with her husband when his lips were compressed and his eyes stern.

"He loves her so!" the mother thought, wistfully. "He will never let her go."

The breakfast was a silent meal, and when it was over, the farmer sat with his face hidden in his hands for a long time. When at last he looked up, the mother's heart gave a great throb of gratitude. She did not need to hear his words to know love had conquered.

"I will go to Albany, Jane, on the next train. I'll be but six hours behind her."

"You'll bring her back, Dan'l?"

"Ay! If she will come."

It was a dreary, and when the farmer reached the city, it was after seven o'clock. He had been to Albany but twice in the sixty-four years of his life, and, he thought bitterly, he had never inquired before where to find the jail.

But it was closed, and he found only a warden on duty at the gate.

"I was wishing to see Henry Newton," he said to this official.

"Any day between ten and two, if you are a relative," was the answer.

"I am—" the words came chokingly, "his father-in-law."

The man gave a long whistle.

"By Jove!" he cried, "another one!"

"Will you tell me what you mean? I am an old man, in heavy trouble, and—this man—has—taken my—child. I am looking for her."

TO BE CONTINUED.



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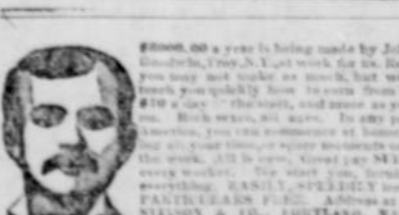
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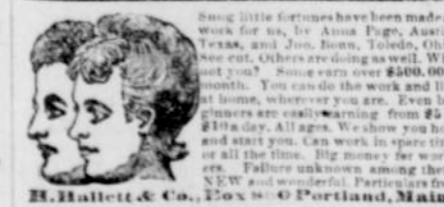


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